PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 114

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1986-87

COMPRISING PERIOD
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6 April 1987

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES — VOLUME 114

TENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1986-87

House of Commons

Monday 6 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

EXETER CITY COUNCIL BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Road Schemes

1. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the changes he proposes to make in the system whereby the economic benefit of road schemes is assessed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): One. We invited a number of experts and others to let us have their comments. I hope that those who intend to comment will do so by 21 April.

Mr. Waller: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the new formula means that the added weight that road users attach to their leisure time means that more road schemes will be justified economically in the future? Does this not demonstrate that the additional boost that the Government have already given to the roads programme to ease congestion is justified?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will recognise that the change in the value of non-work time does not automatically increase the budget for the Department of Transport. It is true that the proposed changes will strengthen the economic case for most planned road schemes and heighten the urgency of building them.

Mr. Hickmet: Will these proposals prevent decisions such as that which resulted in the building of the Humber bridge? What will be done about the debt on that bridge? It is running at £250 million with the capital debt increasing by £22 million per annum. What will happen? Will the Government write off the debt?

Mr. Bottomley: In view of the possible election some time in the next year, my hon. Friend rightly draws attention to the most expensive by-election promise in history — the 1966 Humber bridge proposal. I look forward to hearing the proposals of the Humber bridge board. As the Government acknowledged in their response to the Select Committee report, there is perhaps a different case with the Humber bridge than with other estuarial crossings.

Merchant Fleet

2. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent consultations he has had concerning the future of the merchant fleet.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): I and my Department have had numerous discussions with shipowners and seafarers, their representatives, and other interested parties about matters affecting the future of the United Kingdom shipping industry.

Mr. Kirkwood: Has the Minister had a chance to study the statement made in the 1987 shipping review by the general council, which predicted that the mainland United Kingdom fleet may be as low as 100 ships by 1995? Against that background, does the Minister not think that two matters need to be looked at: first, the tax regime that applies to shipping and the unfair effect that it has

compared with overseas competitors; and, secondly, the unfair competition that comes particularly from countries such as Korea, Taiwan and other Asian countries in terms of the subsidies that are given to their shipbuilding industries?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman will not need to be reminded that the tax question is one for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Having said that, I take the hon. Gentleman's second point quite seriously. He will be aware that under the British presidency during the last six months of last year we were able to secure for the first time a package of measures in regard to European Community shipping, which includes our own. It is important to try to prevent unfair competitive practices of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman referred. It is an important point.

Mr. Ward: Will my right hon. Friend, who is already aware of the problems of the British dredging fleet, keep in mind the fact that we need a dredging fleet capability under United Kingdom control, not only to keep the shipping lanes open for civilian craft, but in particular for servicing naval dockyards?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. We are aware of the needs for shipping for military and civil re-supply in times of crisis or war, and to that extent we are concerned about particular kinds of vessel, including that to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Dixon: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Britain is possibly the only maritime nation that does not have a maritime policy? Will he have a word with his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry and in the Ministry of Defence and produce a policy that will save not only the merchant fleet but the shipbuilding industry?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. We have a maritime policy. He is aware from his experience of the shipbuilding industry and the problems of oversupply, which are a consequence of excessive shipbuilding throughout the world, that most maritime nations have suffered — many even more than we have — from the radical decline in the shipping industry. To the extent that I have departmental responsibilities for these matters, the hon. Gentleman will be aware of and, I trust, will support, the initiatives that I announced in December last year, about which we are consulting and which I hope to bring before the House as soon as possible and as soon as legislation permits.

Mr. Harris: I endorse what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said about possible solutions to the difficulties of the merchant fleet. Will my right hon. Friend urgently consider the report by his Department's working party on the registration of merchant ships, particularly the idea of splitting off the fishing fleet from that register so that the merchant fleet and the shipping fleet can benefit? May we have legislation before the general election?

Mr. Moore: The other day my hon. Friend was given a relatively positive response by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on this issue, which he has pursued persistently. My hon. Friend will know from that response that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I are conscious of these needs and wish to bring measures forward as soon as practicable. I know that concern about this important issue is felt on both sides of the House.

Mr. Loyden: The Government have a policy on the maritime fleet, shipbuilding and the ancillary industries in general, but most people think that it is a policy of presiding over the decline of the British merchant fleet, with no efforts being made to begin the rejuvenation of our merchant fleet and coastal shipping and to make greater use of inland waterways. Those measures would be environmentally and economically advantageous.

Mr. Moore: It will be of no use to our maritime interests if we ignore basic realities. We are living in a world in which there has been a pattern of massive world oversupply of shipping and shipbuilding. In a world recession there has been an enormous drop in oil carriage, two thirds of the decline having been in tanker tonnage. I do not need to remind hon. Members of the relevance of that. There has also been a radical change in our trading patterns with the EEC. In the face of all that, I know that the hon. Gentleman will support the measures that I announced last December and which I hope to introduce in the House in the not too distant future.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Secretary of State aware that the difficulties already mentioned have been compounded by the imposition of light dues, which will have a heavy bearing on the merchant and fishing fleets? The right hon. Gentleman is incorrect in saying that we are well up with our competitors. Britain is one of the worst European nations in terms of backing the merchant service.

Mr. Moore: I know that the right hon. Gentleman, as a fair man, would like me to correct the slightly unfortunate impression that he gave about light dues. Despite the unfortunate recent increases, they have decreased in real terms by 18 per cent. since the Conservative party took office in 1979. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that nearly 90 per cent. of the vessels that are charged those dues are foreign. I am, of course, aware that dues are also relevant to the problems of our port industry.

Mr. Stott: The fact that 90 per cent. are foreign is a clear sign of the decline of the British fleet. Is the Secretary of State aware that he is showing all the hallmarks of his predecessors' complacency on this issue? If the right hon. Gentleman does not believe me, I suggest that he reads the debate on the Royal Navy and the contributions by his right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who spelt out in graphic detail the problems that Britain is facing with the decline of our merchant fleet. Indeed, it is not just a decline; it is a massive haemorrhage. Unless the Government do something soon to stop that decline, within the next 10 years there will not be a British fleet. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not look at what the Irish Government have done with their fleet? What is he doing about the efficient ship programme? The Secretary of State sits in Cabinet beside the Chancellor of the Exchequer, so why does he not ask him to do something about benefits for our ship owners?

Mr. Moore: As the hon. Gentleman would expect, I have read fully and thoroughly the debate in question and

I am not under any illusions about the difficulty facing our merchant marine, nor about the difficulties facing merchant marines throughout the world. Within that context, I know that the hon. Gentleman, who has understandable emotions about this subject, would not wish me to react Canute-like but would wish me to relate to the real problems that we face. The measures that I announced in December seek to address those problems and my statutory responsibility with regard to them.

Local Authority Airports

4. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total of capital allocations to local authority airports since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): Since 1979 we have authorised local authorities to spend in excess of £220 million on airport development. This compares with £16 million spent on capital investment at local authority airports during the period of the last Labour Government.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he contrast the figure that he has quoted with the increase in the traffic at, for example, Bristol airport?

Mr. Spicer: The figure for Bristol since 1979 is 79 per cent. I am sure that that is a very much higher rate of increase than the increase under the previous Administration.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Does the Minister agree that expenditure on capital developments at regional airports would greatly assist the development of the depressed areas of our country?

Mr. Spicer: Yes.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Will my hon. Friend say how much of this investment has taken place at Manchester airport?

Mr. Spicer: Between 1981 and 1986 the figure for Manchester airport was £80 million, which is an enormous figure.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for his confirmation that the creation of a plc for Hurn airport in my constituency will in no way change the planning aspects thereof. Will he please confirm that it is the Government's view that once these plcs have been set up the companies should no longer have the automatic right to get their sticky fingers on taxpayers' and ratepayers' money, as many of them have done in the past? Will he also confirm that county councillors who are directors of these companies will be required not to vote in county councils when these companies come along asking for money?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend's second point is about county councillors. Under the terms of the new Act any councillor or county councillor who is a member of the board of the company will not be allowed to vote on council airport matters. My hon. Friend asked about subsidies. It is our clear intention and desire that these airports should be privatised, but as long as they remain in local authority hands it will be for the local authorities to decide what subsidies to provide for their airports. The accounts will now clearly show the ratepayers what they are contributing towards their airports.

Mr. Snape: Arising from the supplementary question by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) and the Minister's comprehensive reply, does the Minister agree that the economy of the west midlands might well be boosted in the context of capital allocations from central Government by the granting of gateway status to what is, after all, on his Department's own figures the fastest growing provincial airport in Britain?

Mr. Spicer: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to ask about figures, and I was about to give him the figure of £63 million as the amount spent on Birmingham. That is also a case where we have spent massive sums—about four times as much as the Labour Government spent in total. The hon. Gentleman asked about gateway status. I imagine that he is talking about American carriers. If they wish to come forward to apply to enter Birmingham, of course we will listen to their requests very seriously.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend pay attention to those successful and profitable local authority airports, like Southend, that do not want any money at all? We have been trying to persuade the Government to persuade the German authorities to allow us to run one bus to connect Ostend with Frankfurt. We have been trying for two years and have not been able to persuade the Germans to agree to what we were told was agreed by the Common Market 15 years ago.

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is quite right when he says that Southend airport does not cost his ratepayers any money. It balances the books very largely because private companies come in and help with the management of that airport. My hon. Friend asks about the bus that the Germans will not allow. With the great encouragement of my hon. Friend, we have made many representations to the German Government and no doubt they will have heard what he has said in Parliament today.

London (Bus Services)

5. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of London Regional Transport about the quality of bus services.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman from time to time to discuss a range of issues, including quality of service. I last met Sir Keith Bright on 24 March in Camden for the launch of another innovative high frequency midibus service.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that our constituents are thoroughly fed up with the ever-worsening bus services in London? Does he agree that the threatened closure of Wandsworth, Hendon and Clapton bus garages and the threat of others to follow will make matters a great deal worse? Will he make representations to London Regional Transport and London Buses Ltd. to halt the closure of those garages?

Mr. Mitchell: There has been no overall worsening of London Buses' performance, although engineers' industrial action at the end of 1986 caused temporary problems. Waiting times and the percentage of schedules operating this year are considerably better than they were in the early 1980s when the GLC was responsible for them.

As for garage closures, it is for the management of London Buses Ltd. to decide how many garages are needed to service its fleet.

Mr. Chapman: If quality of service is to be measured by increased use and frequency of services, does my hon. Friend agree that since the demise of the GLC there has been an improvement in the quality of public transport throughout London? If quality is to be measured by comfort, does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to achieve that is to increase capital investment, which was increased last year and is to be further increased this year?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about capital investment, which is running at £260 million for LRT this year and is expected to increase to £280 million next year. London Buses Ltd. expects the highest passenger mileage this year since 1978 and has introduced a number of frequent midibus services, of which the Camden Hoppa is the most recent, and these are well and truly welcomed by the travelling public.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister appreciate that large buses are appropriate for many routes, especially the No. 15 route, from which London Transport may remove the Routemasters? Is he aware that when I wrote to the chairman pressing him to retain these very popular platform buses and asking why he was trying to sell them to China he replied that conditions in China were less rigorous than those in London. As the chairman also said that customer service remained the chief objective, does the Minister agree that his answer in relation to the Routemasters was ridiculous, stupid and illogical?

Mr. Mitchell: No, Sir, because platform buses have a greater accident problem with passengers getting on and off, and that must also be taken into account.

A23 (Crawley)

6. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to upgrade the A23 south of Crawley.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Timing of existing schemes for the improvement of the A23 from the M23 at Pease Pottage to Handcross and from Warninglid flyover to Brighton will depend on the progress of the statutory procedures. I am considering the needs of the section between Handcross and Warninglid in the current review of the trunk road programme.

The West Sussex county council is responsible for the A23 between Crawley and the M23 at Pease Pottage.

Mr. Soames: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that it is devoutly to be hoped that the statutory procedures will be hurried up in view of the great difficulties, which he has seen for himself, on the A23 at Pease Pottage and to the south? Will he ensure that as soon as it is convenient and legally possible to do so the important repairs and improvements to that stretch of road will be speedily and efficiently carried out?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. My hon. Friend has a reputation for pressing for the traffic needs of his constituents and others to be met. We hope to consult the public on improvement options for Pease Pottage to Handcross this summer and to publish compulsory purchase orders this year for the Warninglid flyover to Brighton section.

Kings Cross-Edinburgh Line

7. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to when British Rail expects to complete its assessment of the case for investment in the east coast route King's Cross-Edinburgh, and onward routes to Glasgow.

Mr. David Mitchell: East coast mainline electrification was approved in 1984 and it is expected that the scheme will be completed on schedule in May 1991. BR is still at an early stage of assessing whether there is a case for electrifying any further route from Edinburgh to Glasgow.

Mr. Dalyell: Before any conclusions are reached on the matter, could there be some opportunity for public discussion as to whether to electrify the Fauldhouse-Shotts route, or the Linlithgow-Polmont-Falkirk route? Are there not grave implications, one way or the other, for local services, which could be disrupted by long distance London-Glasgow traffic via Edinburgh?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is making a perfectly fair point — one which should certainly be considered. At the moment no proposals have been received from British Rail by Ministers, so we are not yet in a position to give the further examination that is needed. I shall keep the hon. Gentleman's point in mind and draw it to the attention of the board.

Mr. McCrindle: Has the Minister noted the interesting suggestion, made a few days ago, that British Rail might well be divided into two, with the running of the trains left to a private company and British Rail left to run the tracks, the signalling and the stations? Does he think that if that were done it would, in any way, lead to the faster achievement of the objective of the hon. Member for Linlithgow?

Mr. Mitchell: The concept of a track authority has been examined by different Governments and a number of experts. The case for moving in that way has not been made.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware that British Rail plans to reroute all the Anglo-Scottish east coast sleeper services down the west coast from 1988, on the quaint assumption that it is better to arrive at Euston than King's Cross? Does he realise that that would deprive the Borders and Northumberland of sleeper services, and give passengers from Edinburgh a less smooth and comfortable ride than they now enjoy going down the east coast route?

Mr. Mitchell: That question is entirely for the management of British Rail. It is the management that decides — *[Interruption.]* I know that some Opposition Members would like to fiddle with the railways and interfere with the management so that it cannot get on with its job. The routeing of sleeper trains is entirely a matter for British Rail management. Having said that, I will draw the hon. Gentleman's concern to the attention of the chairman.

Mr. Adley: When all is said and done, does my hon. Friend agree that the east coast main line electrification has been discussed for half a century, has now been authorised and is currently under construction? Disregarding all the excuses from the Opposition about why that was not done before, are the Government not

entitled to take some credit for having given the go-ahead for this and many other projects of railway improvement for which we have waited for a long time?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is right. I do not think that the House is fully apprised of how massive a modernisation of British Rail is now fully under way. Between 1974 and 1979 the Labour Government authorised three electrification schemes. We have authorised 19. Approvals were at the rate of £38 million per annum under the previous Government, compared to £69 million under this one, all sums adjusted to current year prices.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister take a look at his geography and recognise that the east coast line extends further than Edinburgh? Will he encourage British Rail, before it contemplates electrification of the line from Edinburgh to Glasgow, running from east to west, to plan now the electrification of the line from Edinburgh to Aberdeen?

Mr. Mitchell: Before the hon. Gentleman declares his interest in that particular matter, I wish to say that British Rail is alert to the opportunities for further electrification. It is considering a number of schemes, and it would be right and proper to see what it brings forward.

Railways (Electrification)

9. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any recent representations concerning the electrification of railway lines serving south Wales.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Secretary of State has received no recent representations on that matter.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that if the Government are serious about the Channel tunnel project, let alone the future well-being of the Welsh economy, electrification should go ahead without any further delay, and coupled with that should be the development, not the closure, of the Severn tunnel junction?

Mr. Mitchell: The form of locomotion that is used between Wales and the Channel tunnel does not necessarily have a direct bearing on the availability of services. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the needs of Wales, which are considerable and well understood, will be borne in mind.

Mr. Wigley: Is it not a disgrace that not a single mile of railway line in Wales is electrified? If the Government, as suggested by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) a few moments ago, take credit for the electrification of the east coast line, surely they must take responsibility for the failure to electrify the railways in Wales?

Mr. Mitchell: There is no implicit failure on the part of British Rail if it has not discovered that it is possible to provide the most efficient, fast and punctual services in Wales by electrification. Modern diesel multiple units, such as the Sprinter train, can provide almost the same standard of service as electrification, and where the numbers travelling are lower and the frequencies fewer than in the intensively used parts of the system, it makes much better value for money for British Rail to provide diesel services.

Infrastructure (Expenditure)

10. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the increase in capital spending on transport infrastructure in real terms since 1982.

Mr. Moore: Capital spending on transport infrastructure is expected to show an increase of 16 per cent. in real terms in 1987-88 over 1982-83.

Mr. Higgins: Is my right hon. Friend aware that that very important figure should be publicised, given the myths that are being perpetrated on the Opposition Benches about the extent of the Government's increase in infrastructure expenditure? Can my right hon. Friend tell us how that compares with the wasteful expenditure that one sometimes gets on things such as subsidies?

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend is, of course, right. I recall so many times in the past his arguments for a better quality and increased pattern of capital expenditure by the state. On my right hon. Friend's specific point, as opposed to the 16 per cent. increase in transport infrastructure capital expenditure in real terms, subsidies are down by 31 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Secretary of State agree that investment in freight facilities is an important part of the infrastructure, not least if we are to have an upturn in manufacturing industry, and also if the nations and regions of Britain are to benefit from the Channel tunnel? How can the right hon. Gentleman justify the closure in the past week of the Freightliner depots?

Mr. Moore: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on getting in the question that has not been asked because of the absence of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). He will recall that the changes that have been announced by Freightliner relate to the problem that it has had on constant losses on the domestic, not the international, side. We must rely on those who seek to manage that successful business to advise us on how they should invest in freight opportunities for the future. They have done that.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend advise the House what proportion of the transport infrastructure applies to the railway industry, which has constantly been attacked by the trade unions, yet under this Government has gone forward in real terms?

Mr. Moore: Without notice I cannot give the precise proportion, but, just in case the Opposition would like me to give the precise figure for capital expenditure in regard to the question, although they will not appreciate the answer, the increase is 48 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Haynes: It is all right for the Secretary of State to stand at the Dispatch Box and brag about the increase for transport infrastructure, but is he aware that in the county of Nottingham we have an expanding industry in many places, particularly in my constituency, which is striving very hard in areas where the Government have closed down one or two pits? Several of those firms have a marvellous export record, but they cannot move the goods. Why not spend some money in my area for a change?

Mr. Moore: I know that the hon. Gentleman will not mind me reminding him of the way in which, under a

Labour Government, far more pits were closed than under this Government, but I understand his legitimate interest in the movement of goods in his area. I hope that he will remember what I have said so far in my answer to the question. In real terms there has been a major increase in all forms of infrastructure capital expenditure throughout the Government's period of office. I know that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that expenditure, especially on British Rail and on local and national roads. I can give the hon. Gentleman detailed figures for his area in a letter that I shall be happy to send him after this Question Time.

Mr. Coombs: When my right hon. Friend is looking at his capital programme for transport infrastructure, will he look again at the A417 and A419 route between Swindon and the M5 at Cheltenham? Does he accept that we now have a patchwork quilt of single and dual carriageway sections, which are dangerous to road safety and could be improved dramatically by the provision of dual carriageway throughout the length of the route? That would also help the economic needs of firms in my constituency.

Mr. Moore: I know that my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for roads will consider my hon. Friend's question carefully. He will also direct my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that since 1979 capital expenditure on roads has increased by 30 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Snape: Will the Secretary of State tell the House how the allocation of that expenditure in 1986 differs from the allocation to various forms of transport in 1982?

Mr. Moore: I should not like to give all the details without notice, but I shall be happy to write to the hon. Gentleman drawing his attention to the variations, going back to 1979, if he wishes. However, that would not deny the basic, essential point that is made from the Dispatch Box time and again, that we have massively increased expenditure on transport capital infrastructure.

Mr. Gow: Does my right hon. Friend recall that when he visited Eastbourne last year he came by train? If he made the journey by car, would he agree that extra capital expenditure is required to improve the A22 trunk road?

Mr. Moore: Of course I went by train, because I knew that it was the proper way to travel on that route. However, I am also aware—because my hon. Friend has told me personally and at the last Question Time, the Minister with responsibility for roads — the road movement down to his constituency. I am sure that he will have heard the arguments again this time.

National Bus Company

12. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in the privatisation of the National Bus Company.

Mr. Moore: Eighteen of the National Bus Company's local operating subsidiaries have been sold to their managements. Twelve other subsidiaries have also been sold. I congratulate NBC on this excellent progress. I am particularly pleased that so many companies have been sold to their managements, and that in most of these cases employees are being given the opportunity to acquire shares in their businesses.

Mr. Proctor: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a bus company in my constituency, Eastern National, has been successfully sold to its management, and that following privatisation the number and standard of services provided by the company have improved dramatically, to the benefit of my constituents and consumer demand in the area?

Mr. Moore: I am delighted to hear that. It reflects well on the Government's programme, which seeks to improve benefits to the consumer.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is continuing disquiet about the price obtained in the sale of National Bus Company subsidiaries? Is he further aware that his reticence in giving the figures is fuelling speculation that the companies are being sold off at grossly low prices and with great possible capital and investment opportunities? Will he now clear the air by telling us as soon as possible the price at which each subsidiary has been sold?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is normally very fair, and I hope that he will recognise that such comments are not normally made in public. On 26 November, in the bus deregulation debate, I said:

"we need to protect confidentiality to ensure that the proper benefits go to the taxpayer".

I explained the problem of trying to illustrate the figures, which might reduce the possibility of the public purse receiving the proper amount of funds from further similar sales, and I said:

"the information must be regularly made available to the National Audit Office, and so to the PAC, which has arrangements for conserving public confidentiality". — [*Official Report*, 26 November 1986; Vol. 106, c. 282.]

That is a means of ensuring that the House is aware through the proper route, without the state being denied the benefits of full and proper proceeds from future sales.

Greater Manchester (Bus Services)

13. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from political parties on the effects of the introduction of competition into bus services in the Greater Manchester area.

Mr. David Mitchell: None from political parties, but during the period following bus deregulation I received a number of representations about problems in Greater Manchester where the PTE failed to deliver the normal, smooth transition achieved in most other areas.

Mr. Favell: If, as now seems to be extraordinarily unlikely, the Conservative party were not returned to office at the next general election, what would happen to free enterprise bus operators and to Stockport's Bee Line Buzz Company? My hon. Friend has already seen this busy little company and knows that it has stung the Greater Manchester Bus Company, which has fumbled and bungled for years, into action. Stockport is now all abuzz. What will happen to us if that untoward event were to happen?

Mr. Mitchell: I have visited the Bee Line Buzz Company in south Manchester, where over 220 minibuses are operating at present. The whole place is a hive of activity. My hon. Friend is right to be concerned about the future of minibus activities in the 150 towns and villages

up and down the country where minibuses operate, including Manchester, because the Labour party's policy for transport statement says:

"The first legislation to be introduced by a Labour Transport Secretary will include the repeal of the 1985 Transport Act".

In that case, my hon. Friend has very good reason to be concerned, as have many other people who have benefited from the new services that have been introduced following the passing of the Act.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Wright Case (Appeal)

42. **Mr. Adley** asked the Attorney-General what discussions he intends to have about the progress of Her Majesty's Government's appeal in the Wright case.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): I have had discussions with my colleagues within Government and with counsel in the case and these discussions will continue during the preparation of the appeal. As Members of the House will know, the Government lodged their notice of appeal on 31 March.

Mr. Adley: Speculation about some of the allegations of this obsessive, senile twerp range from "predictable" in the case of Walsall to "reasonable" in the case of Leeds, South, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the main issue is the bounden duty of somebody who has taken an oath of security to the Crown to honour those pledges of confidentiality? As the Opposition parties fall over themselves to criticise the Government for the course that they are following, will my right hon. and learned Friend take some comfort from the fact that most of our fellow citizens applaud the Government's firm, albeit uncomfortable, line?

The Attorney-General: I think that it would be right if I did not comment on my hon. Friend's opening words. After that, he put his finger on exactly the point that the Government are seeking to make.

Mr. Foot: Will the Attorney-General comment on the allegation that has also been raised in connection with this affair: that there were serious breaches of the law by agents of MI5? Will the Attorney-General now confirm that if the Government thought that it was a serious enough matter they could have an independent investigation into it, without having to wait until the end of the case?

The Attorney-General: I shall make certain that the right hon. Gentleman's remarks are made known to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, because that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Hickmet: Will my right hon. and learned Friend seek an undertaking from the office of the Leader of the Opposition that during the appeal his office, and those Opposition Members who behaved like that during the hearing at first instance, will not contact the office of Mr. Malcolm Turnbull? What steps does the Crown propose to take to ensure that Mr. Paul Greengrass is not present in court when hearings take place in camera, because he informed other journalists waiting outside the court about the proceedings inside the court, and it is strongly suspected that this information filtered back to this House and that it was used by Opposition Members? What action will be taken to prevent a repetition of what happened last time?

The Attorney-General: It is not for me to advise the Leader of the Opposition. It is up to his good sense as to how he behaves during the course of the appeal.

As for Mr. Greengrass, that will be a matter for the Court of Appeal to decide, just as Mr. Justice Powell, against the Crown's wishes, allowed Mr. Greengrass to attend the hearings.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Attorney-General recognise that all the legal ramifications and the rest will not stop Labour Members demanding that there should be a full judicial inquiry into the serious allegations that criminal and subversive elements in MI5 tried to destabilise an elected Government in the 1970s? Are not the Attorney-General and his right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General not concerned at the way in which the Prime Minister has, over a number of years, seriously besmirched their office and used various ways to undermine the position of the Attorney-General?

The Attorney-General: With regard to the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am satisfied, as is my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, that there has never been any case in which any improper influence was brought to bear by the Prime Minister upon our office. I want to make that absolutely clear.

Mr. Winnick: The Solicitor-General's letter.

The Attorney-General: That was written in the ordinary course of his duties.

Bail Act 1976

43. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor has received any representations from the judiciary about the working of the Bail Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The Lord Chancellor does not reveal confidential communications between judges and himself. The Lord Chancellor has, however, authorised me to say that he has not received any representations from the judiciary on this subject. The working of the Bail Act is a matter for the Home Secretary.

Mr. Greenway: Bearing in mind last Wednesday's vote on capital punishment, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is more important than ever that the circumstances under which Winston Silcott was released from gaol and subsequently murdered PC Blakelock must never be repeated? What assurance can he give the House that the matter is being looked into and that suitable action will be taken?

The Solicitor-General: Everything practicable must be done to ensure that those circumstances — I am referring, of course, to the murder of the police constable by somebody who was on bail—are not repeated. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is looking at the events that led to the grant of bail to Winston Silcott. The Government will consider whether there are any lessons to be learnt and will take into account the points made in the House since the case.

Mr. John Morris: The Attorney-General is fond of telling the House about the importance of collective

responsibility. Which side are the Law Officers on? Are they on the side of the Lord Chancellor, or of the Home Secretary? In an outburst the other day the Lord Chancellor said that the Bail Act was not working and that he had prophesied that it would not do so. However, the Home Secretary had been saying how important it was to ensure that not too many people were kept in prison, that the courts are more reluctant now to let people out on bail and that one fifth of the people in prison have not yet been convicted. Will the Solicitor-General bring the importance of collective responsibility to the attention of the Lord Chancellor?

The Solicitor-General: The opening part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question owed more to careful preparation than good judgment. The Lord Chancellor has said—I have taken the trouble to see a transcript of the broadcast—that there might be a case for reviewing the operation of the Bail Act and, equally, it may be necessary to allow the Act to remain in force for rather longer before a clear picture will emerge. I do not think that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was saying anything different. As I have just told the House, he is looking at the events leading up to the granting of bail to Winston Silcott, he will consider whether there are any lessons to be learnt and he will take into account all the points that have been made.

Divorce (Child Custody)

44. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Attorney-General what information he has about the average time taken in settling disputes in divorce cases over the custody of children.

The Solicitor-General: For an application estimated to last half a day, the average time between the issue of the application and the hearing is seven weeks. For an application estimated to last one day, the average is eight weeks. Expedition is possible in urgent cases on application to the court.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that with 160,000 children under 17 being involved in divorce cases annually, all too often it is they who are the innocent, inarticulate and often unrepresented parties who pay the price? Will he look at the Law Commission's recent working document, which suggests that disputes often take over six months to settle? That may be long for an adult, but it can be almost a lifetime for a child. Will he consider imposing a time limit in those cases?

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend, who sits as a magistrate and knows a great deal about cases such as this, is absolutely right when she says that it is children who suffer as a result of delays. The Government will not reach a decision in advance of a final report from the Law Commission, and the commission itself is awaiting responses from the public and various organisations which have been consulted on its working paper.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the Solicitor-General aware that one of the reasons for the delay in custody cases is the extreme difficulty of arranging conciliation appointments, because of the shortage of court welfare officers to carry out those appointments? Will he take steps to ensure that more court welfare officers are appointed quickly so that that part of the process can at least be dealt with?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. and learned Gentleman is right to say that one of the factors causing delay between inception and determination of these cases is the need to get welfare reports. I shall draw the attention of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor to this point.

Sir Antony Buck: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the Law Commission expedites its recommendation, as this matter is causing considerable concern? What is the time scale likely to be before its deliberations come before him?

The Solicitor-General: I am sure that it is necessary that there is a considered final report from the Law Commission, but I do not think that my hon. and learned Friend would wish that to precede careful consideration of the responses to the consultation.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is the Solicitor-General aware—I am sure he is—that the answers that he is giving in response to this question are the reason why there is so much support for the family courts campaign? What is the Government's attitude to that campaign? Will we have a debate on family courts in Government time?

The Solicitor-General: A family court would not of itself cure the problem of delay, but I agree with the implication of the hon. Gentleman's question—that the setting up of family courts would provide the opportunity for reviewing procedures. The Government are considering the position in the light of the responses to the consultation paper on family and domestic jurisdiction, which was published last year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid (Environmental Factors)

52. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on what account is taken of environmental factors in planning the overseas aid programme.

53. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the methods by which he takes into account, in project appraisal procedures, environmental considerations such as impact on soil erosion, deforestation and pollution in developing countries in receipt of United Kingdom aid.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): Environmental concerns are at the forefront of our thinking. Our approach is set out in the booklet "The Environment and the British Air Programme", published to mark the European Year of the Environment. Copies are in the Library and have been widely circulated among Members.

Mr. Bowden: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. I admire the publication that he mentioned. I am pleased that the Government are taking the environment issue so seriously. However, as 40 per cent. of our aid goes through multilateral agencies, will my hon. Friend ensure that those agencies consider environmental issues with the same seriousness?

Mr. Patten: I am delighted to be able to assure my hon. Friend that this issue will be discussed at the spring meeting of the development committee of the World Bank

this week. I also intend to raise it at the European Community Development Council meeting in May, if not otherwise engaged.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the rain forest at the forefront of the Minister's thinking?

Mr. Patten: Absolutely. I draw the attention of the hon. Gentleman to what we say in the booklet that I mentioned on that subject, and in particular to our programme on the Korup forest.

Mr. Hughes: Given the Minister's declared commitment to environmental programmes and policies and the fact that this is the European Year of the Environment, why was his Department's environmental unit abolished some years ago and merged into the natural resources section? Will he undertake to reconsider that this year, so that environmental matters can have the precedence in his Department that his statements imply they should have?

Mr. Patten: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. We have 23 professional natural resources advisers, backed up by 320 scientists and experts in our scientific units. We have two social development advisers, and we have recently appointed an environment adviser. We have quite enough professional advice, and more than many others.

Mr. Madel: Does my hon. Friend agree that more scientific research is needed into forestry, so that reafforestation can take place more quickly and effectively?

Mr. Patten: There is a strong argument for that. I am pleased that our aid to forestry has increased by 80 per cent. over the past four or five years, and also that our research programme related to environmental issues has increased.

Mr. Corbyn: When the Minister attends the EEC meeting in May, will he ensure that no EEC funds or, if it is in his power to do so, no World Bank funds, are used to finance development projects in the Amazon rain forest that result in the destruction of the environment of the indigenous Indian community and cause serious soil pollution through deforestation?

Mr. Patten: As I said earlier, if I am able to attend the Development Council meeting in May I shall raise the sort of matter to which the hon. Gentleman refers, because I wish environmental issues to be discussed at such meetings.

Rotary International (Polio Campaign)

54. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to assist with Rotary International's Polio Plus Campaign overseas.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have agreed to give £1 million to the campaign.

Mr. Atkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and for the Government's support for the splendid voluntary initiatives of Rotarians in this country and abroad. What steps are the Government taking elsewhere to eliminate childhood diseases in Africa and in primary health care generally?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend that this is an excellent campaign. The Rotarians are to be congratulated on their initiative, and I am sure that all hon. Members will want to give the campaign maximum support in their constituencies.

In addition to the support that we are giving to the campaign, I announced recently an increased contribution of £5 million to UNICEF, much of which will be used to help immunisation programmes in China, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Third World Debt

55. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to take any new initiatives with regard to the debt problems of Third-world countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are already considering new initiatives and the next opportunity to take these further will be later this week at the spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister make the best possible use of that opportunity to stress the urgency of the situation, which is illustrated by what is happening in Brazil, and the need for international action? Will he also note the all-party overseas development group's report on international debt, which will be published shortly after Easter?

Mr. Patten: I regret Brazil's recent decision to suspend the payment of interest on commercial debt. It is a matter for the Brazilians to discuss directly with the banks, and I hope that negotiations will begin soon.

On the more general issue of debt, particularly the debt owed by Africa's poorest countries, Britain has played a leading role in discussions about exceptional measures to deal with that problem. We expect further discussions at meetings of the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development this week, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer will attend. If there are further developments, no doubt he will inform the House. The details of any new measures will take some time to resolve.

Mr. Bowen Wells: If additional money is made available to the African countries to which my hon. Friend referred, will it be in addition to the current budget, or will it come out of that budget and, therefore, deprive development projects and other schemes of necessary money?

Mr. Patten: The details have not yet been resolved, but I assure my hon. Friend that new measures would not be at the expense of the existing aid programme.

Mr. Stuart Holland: The Minister will be aware that it is indeed debt, rather than drought, deprivation or disease, that is affecting the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. May we be sure that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer addresses these issues on Friday we shall not have a merely cosmetic response, but that the right hon. Gentleman will address the fact that we need to reschedule the debt of developing countries, to cap interest rate ceilings, especially for sub-Saharan African countries, and to fix their debt repayments as a given percentage of their export earnings? For sub-Saharan Africa we need, in particular, a write-down, if not a write-off, of a major share of that debt. May we have an assurance that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will address those issues rather than talk, talk and talk again about the problem?

Mr. Patten: As ever, the Chancellor's response will be profound rather than superficial.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Will my hon. Friend reread the Pentateuch with regard to years of jubilee and debt remission and see whether it has any application to our present problems with the Third world?

Mr. Patten: That point has already been made to me by the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, though I am not sure that it would read the Pentateuch in exactly the same way as would my hon. Friend.

Multilateral Organisations

56. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom aid goes through multilateral organisations other than the European Economic Community.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1985-86, 23 per cent.—that is £279 million—of the gross aid programme went to multilateral organisations other than the European Community.

Mr. Deakins: Is the Minister aware that many Opposition Members would like to see that proportion increased, since it is very much in the interests of developing countries that, as far as possible, aid should be without the sort of strings that generally accompany it when it is provided on a national or multilateral basis through the EEC? Can he assure us that he is actively seeking to change that percentage in the right way?

Mr. Patten: I find that for about 50 per cent. of the time I am criticised for our multilateral contributions going up too much, and the other 50 per cent. of the time I am criticised on the other flank with regard to our bilateral contributions. I believe that we have the balance about right. I was particularly pleased recently that we were able to make a contribution of £524 million to the replenishment of the International Development Association. The hon. Gentleman will also know about our contributions to the International Fund for Agricultural Development special programme for Africa and to the UNICEF global immunisation programme, which I mentioned earlier.

Africa

57. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken by the British Government to follow up the programme of action agreed at the United Nations special session on Africa last May.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since the special session we have made new pledges of over £180 million in bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa, excluding emergency assistance. We have also supported the larger than expected replenishment of the International Development Association, up to half of which will go to Africa. I have also agreed to contribute to the IFAD special programme for sub-Saharan African countries.

Mr. Grist: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that African Governments are coming to their senses over the management of their economies? Has he discussed that with any African Governments recently?

Mr. Patten: Yes, I am very pleased about the extent to which many aid recipients in Africa are embarking on structural adjustments and policy reform programmes. I was in Tanzania recently, where I pledged £25 million in support of policy reform, making a total of £50 million pledged in the past year.

Privatisation (Multiple Share Applications)

3.31 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fresh evidence of hon. Members making multiple share applications, will the Government now make a statement, and will the Attorney-General also make a statement on the attitude of the DPP? May we have confirmation that everyone is equal under the law?

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for the Government, not a matter of order or for me.

BILL PRESENTED

INFANT LIFE (PRESERVATION) AND PATERNAL RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Bruinvels, supported by Sir John Biggs-Davison, presented a Bill to reduce the period of pregnancy which for the purposes of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 is evidence that a woman is pregnant of a child capable of being born alive and to provide for the father of the unborn child to be consulted where a termination is intended: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 1 May and to be printed. [Bill 133.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Ordered,

That the draft British Nuclear Fuels plc (Financial Limit) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Opposition Day

[11TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Social and Economic Policies

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.32 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move:

That this House notes with concern the increasing divisions within British society; condemns the Government for the constant pursuit of policies which have widened these divisions; and loold forward to the time when a Government is elected which is committed to the creation of one nation.

May I begin by expressing my personal regret that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), the leader of the Social Democratic party, is not with us today.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: May I express my gratitude for the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has returned from what I understand was his mission to open Joanna Southcott's box, in order to predict more accurately the dates of flood, famine, pestilence and the end of the world. I understand that the right hon. Gentleman has no prediction to make about the second coming, as he believes that that has happened already. I shall now turn from the right hon. Member for Devonport to serious matters.

This debate is about a divided nation and a Government with double standards, a Government who insist that the highest paid must be paid more to increase incentives, but insist equally that the lowest paid must be paid less to preserve jobs. This debate is about a Government who can afford to abandon the investment income surcharge, but who can afford an increase in pensions of only 80p. It is about a Government who claim to support the family and family values but who increase homelessness, force families into bed-and-breakfast accommodation and prevent husbands from coming to Britain to join their British wives because those husbands are black or Asian.

The double standards of the Government are exemplified and demonstrated by the claims that they are making about the success of their economic policies. The Prime Minister says, and will repeat with increasing stridency in the weeks ahead, that Conservatism has produced prosperity.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Hear, hear.

Mr. Hattersley: I expected that someone would say that. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell me, if that is true and we have the unique prosperity which the hon. Gentleman claims and about which he cheers, why we cannot afford to pay pensioner couples an additional £8 and a single pensioner £5 more, thus taking a major step towards returning pensions to the levels that they would have been had the Government not broken the link between increases in pensions and increases in earnings?

If we are so prosperous, why can we not increase child benefit by £3 a week, thus increasing its purchasing power and helping the hardest-hit families? If the economy is so

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buoyant, or our prosperity so certain and secure, why can we not provide a decent system of unemployment benefit for the 1·3 million men and women who have been out of work and on the dole for a year or more? There is now a greater number of long-term unemployed than the sum total of unemployed people in 1979. Why, if we are so prosperous a nation, do the Government make mean little cuts in maternity grant, death grant, housing benefit and mortgage relief for the unemployed?

The Government claim that they have created an economic miracle and define "economic miracle" as an average rate of growth of less than 1·4 per cent. a year, yet they refuse point blank to provide help for the hard-pressed families, pensioners and the unemployed. Either the claims of economic success are bogus, or the Government simply do not care about pensioners, the unemployed and the sick and poor.

Anyone who denies that the Tory party has cynically survived on double standards should answer two questions. What does the House imagine that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) would say to an unemployed man in his constituency who made six separate applications for supplementary benefit? Would he say that such a man had done nothing wrong, or would he excuse that man because he claimed that he did not under the rules? What would the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram) say about a woman in his constituency——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The tradition is that we do not criticise hon. Members, except by motion.

Mr. Hattersley: With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, your final comments were inaudible because of objections from my hon. Friends——

Mr. Speaker: I said except by motion.

Mr. Hattersley: May I make two points? First, I notified each of the hon. Members that I intended to refer to them. Secondly, the notion that we do not criticise one another on matters such as this will come as a surprise to some of my hon. Friends. If you, Mr. Speaker, instruct me to abandon the points with regard to the behaviour of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn or the hon. Member for Ludlow, I shall do so, although I suspect that the country will not abide by your ruling and that we shall hear more about it in other places on other occasions.

I turn from the double standards—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am bound by the rules of the House.

Mr. Hattersley: I say to my hon. Friends that I shall abide by your ruling. The point has been made, and it will be made, made and made again outside the House.

I turn from the double standards of the Tory party to the facts about the divided nation which, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall be able to pursue.

Britain is a deeply divided society, and the gulf between the classes, regions and races has widened continually, consistently and comprehensively since 1979. It has not happened by chance or coincidence. The widening gulf between the rich and the rest, north and south, inner cities and outer suburbs, working and unemployed and black and white is the direct result—indeed, the intentional outcome—of government policy. That is the natural and inevitable outcome of the new Conservatism. The philosophers of the new Right, for whom the Prime Minister has open and apparently unrestrained admiration, base their hope of progress on increasing inequality. It is clear that——

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): What is wrong with that?

Mr. Hattersley: I am asked what is wrong with that. Will you allow me to criticise the hon. Gentleman, Mr. Speaker? I shall probably refer to him precisely.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Of course.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman and I were brought up in Sheffield during the 1950s and 1960s. He is saying that what has happened in Sheffield, among other places in the north, is the result of the Government's policies. Does he accept that what happened in Sheffield and other places throughout the north, north-west and north-east is the product of the decline that set in after the war, which had nothing to do with this Government, who have done a geat deal to sort out the problems and to restore economic prosperity to this country?

Mr. Hattersley: I would not accept that for a second. The hon. Gentleman boasts, as he is entitled to do, because it is a matter of great credit that he was born and brought up in Sheffield, but I hope that he will join me in congratulating Sheffield city council, which is sometimes derided by Ministers as a loony left council, on the commendation that it has received from the Department of Education and Science for running one of the best education systems in Britain.

I want to deal with the philosophy of the new Right and its tactics, which have been based and built on that philosophy. It is clear that Conservative tacticians believe that by neglecting the men and women whose votes they have already lost — the unemployed, the ethnic minorities and the one-parent families — they can concentrate resources on the purchase of votes in the prosperous south and in the prosperous suburbs. I believe that the modern Conservative party is profoundly wrong in that judgment and that its error of underestimating the British people was demonstrated in its Budget strategy. The Government had £6 million to spend, and they chose not to invest it on our future. All the evidence remains that it was not the Budget that the people needed and wanted.

The Labour party and I believe that the lasting and real success of this country, whether it is to be measured by a reduction in the crime rate or by increases in national income, is dependent upon the creation of one nation in which every citizen feels part of the whole community, with a vested interest in society's success. A more equal society will be a more prosperous society and a more peaceful society. The vast majority of the people want to see the freer and fairer society against which the Tory Government have turned their face.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The right hon. Gentleman has repeatedly, as in the terms of the motion, referred to one nation. Will he, in the forthcoming election, give Scotland and Wales the message that they are fighting for one nation?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman will discover as my speech continues that I prudently make a point of not

referring to the regions, but refer to the nations and the regions. This is explicitly intended to meet the hon. Gentleman's point. If he wants me to elaborate, I shall do so. I agree with the point about the nationhood of Wales and Scotland. I deeply resent the idea that Wales and Scotland have been written off economically and socially by the Government. That is the view of many people who do not live in those two nations.

The Conservative Central Office is wrong to believe that the haves have no concern for the welfare and prospects of the have-nots. The well-off, the well-housed and the well-educated realise that they have the strongest vested interest in living in a society which is not ravaged by poverty and unemployment and which does not deny a decent house to millions of its families, does not discriminate against the black and Asian British, does not deny full-time education to working-class teenagers and does not provide a declining level of medical care for those families who cannot afford private treatment. The British people have more compassion and more commonsense than the chairman of the Tory party realises.

With the general election approaching, the more intelligent Conservatives will attempt to obscure the hard face of the real Tory party. Last Saturday the cosmetic treatment was applied by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Energy, both of whom spoke in Oxford about disadvantage and deprivation.

My constituency is part of the inner city of Birmingham. let me tell those two right hon. Members what has happened since they joined the Government in terms of disadvatage and deprivation in the inner city that I know best. In my inner city ward, male unemployment is now almost 50 per cent. Improvement grants planned and promised by a Tory council cannot be financed. Career teachers in the secondary schools are being retrained to help young people face four or five continuous years on the dole. I hope that during the forthcoming election campaign the Prime Minister will come to Sparkbrook and express the Government's concern about the conditions in the inner cities. I can promise her a peaceful, but spontaneous, reception.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I will, probably for the last time, but certainly to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Stokes: The right hon. Gentleman knows that my constituency is also in the west midlands, not far from his. If things are as bad as he says, why is the Conservative party leading so heavily in national polls, and even leading by several points in the west midlands?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman, who has spent so much of his time parading traditional values, ought to spend a moment thinking, not about opinion polls, but about the real lives of the real people that we are debating. Those people include the 50 per cent. of male unemployed in my constituency, in whose interest I deeply resent what is happening as a result of the Government's policies.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that while his party and the alliance parties understand the inner cities, which are, mainly, no-go areas for the Government, the difference is that the alliance parties also understand and represent the rural poverty which exists in those areas, from which the Labour party is now entirely excluded?

Mr. Hattersley: I apologise to the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) because his triviality has been matched by the triviality of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I intend to do what is expected of the Opposition and that is to talk about real people with real problems, and about the way in which those problems, have been intensified during the last nine years.

The problem that we see in the inner cities is the most dramatic and desperate manifestation of our divided society. A majority of the British people have a moral objection to these divisions in all their manifestations. I know that all those people pay a price for living in a divided nation, as the the most typical and terrifying example of the penalties demonstrates. In the last eight years there has been a crime explosion in Britain. Total crime has increased by 50 per cent., burglary by 60 per cent., violence against the person by 44 per cent., theft by 39 per cent., and criminal damage—the vandalism that defaces so much of our country—by 91 per cent. In every community there is a growing fear that the crime wave will engulf us all.

While preaching a crusade against crime and making token attacks on its symptoms, the Government have fostered the conditions in which crime flourishes. The crime rate has escalated because of the great divide—the consumer boom and credit cards on one side, and unemployment on the other. That is not my judgment; it is the opinion expressed by Sir Kenneth Newman, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Between 1979 and 1986, the last year for which figures are available, gross earnings, that is to say the earnings before tax of the lowest paid 10 per cent. of the workers, increased by 80 per cent. Over the same period, the earnings of the most highly paid 10 per cent. rose by 180 per cent.

The increase received by the lowest paid was exactly the same as the increase in the retail prices index, so, while the rich grew richer, the absolute best that can be said about the real earnings of the poor is that they stood still. Inflation, however, hits low-income families far harder than it hits those higher up the income scale. Indeed, a special inflation index has been constructed for the low-paid. This index rose by 86 per cent. in a period of seven years in which the pre-tax earnings of the low-paid rose by only 80 per cent. At a time when the City began to pay what the Chancellor himself has described as "telephone number salaries", when the Cabinet Secretary's salary was increased by 50 per cent. and when the chairman of British Telecom doubled his own salary to celebrate privatisation, the real value of the gross earnings of the lower paid actually fell.

That was just the beginning. The gap that separates the income groups—the gulf between the rich and the rest—was actually widened by the tax structure. The Prime Minister always talks about income tax, conveniently ignoring national insurance contributions, which are also a direct tax. On an honest calculation, for a family with two children and one wage of half the national average the tax contribution has risen by 36 per cent., while for a similar family living on one wage of twice the national average the direct tax burden has fallen. Instead of reducing the discrepancy between the living standards of the rich and the rest, the tax system has accentuated it, and the richer the taxpayer, the greater the benefit. The taxpayer with five times average earnings has enjoyed a tax cut of 11·2 per cent., while the taxpayer with 20 times

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average earnings has had a bonanza of 25 per cent. Moreover, that calculation of the burdens placed on lower income families and the benefits heaped on the rich does not even include the near doubling of VAT, a tax by which the least well off are hardest hit.

The result of changes in gross earnings and tax rates has been, according to the Treasury's own figures, that the richest 10 per cent. have improved their standard of living seven times faster than the poorest 10 per cent. If the Government were re-elected the gap would widen still further, because the income tax cuts in the Budget would be wiped out by a massive increase in VAT. The tax cuts that help the rich will be maintained, but other increases will hit the rest.

The Paymaster General may seek to justify a system that increases unemployment by more than 2 million and cuts the living standards of the lowest paid, while giving the largest tax reductions—£3·6 billion in a full year—to those who need them least. That £3·6 billion turns out to be just a little more than the amount that we discover today has been denied to pensioners by the break between their annual increases and the level of earnings. A pensioner couple should be receiving £11 per week more than they receive today. When pensioners wonder why the Government have denied them that £11, I hope that the message will go out to them from the Tory party that they should be consoled by the knowledge that their sacrifice has not been in vain, because it has made possible tax cuts of £50 per day for the very highest paid.

In all these particulars, the Government can at least take credit for consistency. They have not only betrayed the old, who most need help. They have also betrayed the young, with an equal determination to assist the privileged few at the expense of the majority of pupils in our schools and sixth form colleges. The education budget allows £30 billion per year for the assisted places scheme in private schools—a subsidy of £30 million for children who are already advantaged and whose families already enjoy social and financial privilege.

Meanwhile, state schools are short of books and equipment. Urgent repairs and renovations wait to be done. At the same time, city technology colleges are being established in the most prosperous areas and the inner cities are being neglected. These city technology colleges are, as the new director of the CBI described them a month ago, at best irrelevant. At worst, they are a stark example of the deliberate creation of divisions within society. Thus, we are to have a city technology college in Solihull, while five miles down the road in Sparkbrook valiant work is being done in huge classrooms, in buildings that should have been pulled down 10 to 15 years ago.

The Secretary of State for Social Services seemed to scoff at me for representing the interests of my constituents. Let me tell him that the perspective of life in Great Britain is slightly different in Sparkbrook from that enjoyed in Sutton Coldfield. I propose, today and in other debates, to speak for the dispossessed, the disadvantaged, the underprivileged and all those who have been penalised——

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler) *rose*——

Mr. Hattlersley: I shall not give way immediately. I shall give the Secretary of State time in which the Paymaster General can tell him what to say.

Mr. Fowler: I was objecting to the right hon. Gentleman's reference to Solihull. As he well knows, the area that is most improved and advantaged by the facility is Chelmsley Wood, which, of course, is part of Solihull. In the interests of honesty, the right hon. Gentleman should make that clear.

Mr. Hattersley: That is not true. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether I should abide by your ruling better by saying that the right hon. Gentleman has made a mistake, or by saying that he invented his answer. The college in Solihull will help most the privileged children of privileged families. Down the road in Sparkbrook, Ladywood and Small Heath, or, for that matter, in inner cities all over the country, there are overcrowded classes, dilapidated buildings, shortage of teachers of English as a second language and of teachers dealing with remedial needs. At the same time——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield) *rose*——

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: —parents are increasingly being asked to pay for or contribute towards essential equipment for their children's education. I am sorry to enrage the Secretary of State's sensitivities, but paying for equipment is one thing in Sutton Coldfield and quite another—it is impossible—in Sparkbrook and areas like it.

Children who live in underprivileged areas are those most in need of a regular school meal. In 1979 the law required every education authority to provide a midday meal up to a national standard of nutrition, at a national price of 25p. At that time two thirds of all school children had a school meal, but in 1980 the Tory Government abolished the obligation to provide such meals and removed the price limit from them. In areas under Tory-controlled authorities the average price rose from 25p to 67p.

Inevitably, the number of children taking school meals declined from more than 66 per cent. to barely 50 per cent. The provision of free school meals for those in special need simply does not protect many of the children who most need a school meal. Indeed, all means-tested systems of welfare and benefits inevitably discriminate against the least self-confident, the least articulate and the least determined.

All hon. Members must know from their constituency surgery work of the problems faced by applicants for discretionary grants, and of the confusion of tenants who are unable to calculate their full entitlement to housing benefit. They must know of the supplementary benefit recipient whose assessment has under-calculated his need. In my constituency surgery, an old, single, confused man —*[Laughter.]* You can see, Mr. Speaker, why some hon. Members vote against televising the Chamber.

I repeat that I have seen in my constituency surgery an old, single, confused man who was refused a bedding allowance because new regulations introduced by the Government required him first to prove that he had made three attempts to find furnished accommodation. That is a disgrace to a civilised country, and I have no doubt that the complications of the benefit regulations are intended to reduce the number of successful applicants. It is part of

the Government's campaign against so-called social security scroungers — a campaign which they have pursued with a determination which does not characterise the drive against wrongdoers in the City and in other parts of the community.

That is another example of Government policy, of Tory conduct and the damage that it does to the welfare of the most underprivileged members of society, but the Government's neglect of the generality of families is equally blatant and undeniable. Increases in child benefit are the most direct and cheapest way of helping low and moderate-income families, but increases in child benefit have not kept pace with increases in the cost of living. Their real value has fallen during the past eight years. That leads me to ask the Paymaster General a direct question on the subject. I shall give way immediately if he wishes to reply. Does he believe that child benefit should at least maintain its real value? As he knows, it has lost value during the past eight years. Does he agree that, as a minimum,

"It is therefore essential to put this benefit in some relationship to the index-linking and regular review procedure"?—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 24 June 1975; c. 149.]

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I seem to remember speaking of voting for that during the period of hyper-inflation caused by the Labour Government, and I seem to remember the right hon. Gentleman voting against it.

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. and learned Gentleman believed it then, but he does not believe it now that his talents have been recognised and he has been elevated to the glory of special assistant to Lord Young. I believe it now, and I believe that it should be introduced in a way that protects families and concentrates resources on them. All the evidence confirms that the families most in need, the 4 million unemployed, pensioners and families on wages that hold them below the poverty line, suffer from multiple deprivation under the Government. All the deprivations — low income, reduced services, reduced benefits, deteriorating housing and increasingly inadequate medical care—come together.

In Britain today, 800,000 families are in need of decent housing. Those families live in multiple occupation, in homes unfit for human habitation and in slums and tenements. The Building Employers Confederation reports an annual shortfall between demand and supply of 100,000 houses. That annual shortfall, like the total shortage, is the direct result of the Government's abandonment of public sector housebuilding. In 1978, 107,000 municipal houses were built in Britain. Last year the total was barely a quarter of that, at 31,000. Homelessness has doubled since the Government were elected, and let there be no doubt why that is: the Government have turned their back on those in greatest housing need. Meanwhile, the highest earners with the largest mortgages enjoy the highest tax relief on their investments and on their appreciating assets.

The remedy for the housing crisis will come when we again begin to build public sector housing. That process will help in the general reduction of unemployment, which has been the prime cause of increased poverty during the past eight years. The indictment of the Government for the jobs that they have lost and the unemployment that they have caused demonstrates two distinct tragedies: first, the widening gulf between those who are at work and those who are unemployed; and, secondly, the widening gulf between the nations and the regions of the United Kingdom.

In East Anglia, employees in work have increased by 8·5 per cent. in eight years; in the south-east there has been a job loss of about 2 per cent.; but in Wales the total number of jobs has fallen by almost 17 per cent.; in the north-west by 15 per cent.; in the northern region by 14 per cent.; and in the west midlands by 10 per cent. Exactly the same pattern applies for the long-term unemployed. In the west midlands, almost a third of the unemployed have been without work for more than a year. In the north and north-west, it is almost as bad at 29 per cent. To the Government, Scotland, Wales, the north, the north-west and the industrial midlands are distant countries about which they know little—and care even less.

A similar rule—neglect of those most in need—has applied to the provision of health care.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in my borough, which is in an area of high unemployment, low wages and the rest, no council dwellings have been built since 1979, simply because of Government policy? Does he know that more than 1,000 pensioners with firm medical recommendations from community physicians are waiting for special old-age pensioners' bungalows? Most of those people will never be rehoused. That is the deplorable state of public sector housing in my borough.

Mr. Hattersley: The tragedy of my hon. Friend's example is that it is not unique, but I do not diminish the importance of his point by saying that. Similar conditions apply throughout the country. They apply — this compounds the disgrace—in an economy that is soon to be projected as the most successful economy in Western Europe. Of course, that is untrue, and it undermines the Conservatives's claim to have anything resembling care and compassion for the people of the country.

The report from the Health Education Council entitled "The Health Divide", which managed to escape from the clutches of its Tory chairman last week, confirms my point. The report's conclusions are simple and stark. The health of upper income families has improved much more rapidly than has the health of families on low incomes. In some cases, the health of poorer families has deteriorated. The health divide is also a life expectancy divide, for the risk of death from coronary heart disease decreased by 12 per cent. among the professional classes, but increased by 6 per cent. among manual workers.

The report's conclusions have been challenged, but all the evidence supports the view that the report is correct. I offer four suggestions as to why it is wholly vindicated. First, it has been attacked by Woodrow Wyatt, the Plato of the *News of the World*. When the Government are especially worried, they wheel out their most consistent toady to address the subject in the style and grammar of a Monday Club newsletter. Perhaps more important in terms of the report's credibility, "The Health Divide" does no more than confirm the class differences in health prospects and life expectancy which have already been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt. It was the message of the Black report, which the Government tried to suppress eight years ago. Last year, *Social Trends* recorded that variations in the standard mortality rate by

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social classes were as high in recent years as they were 50 years ago. Only last August a survey of health prospects, led by the *Lancet*, concluded:

"The social gap has widened. Widening in equalities between social groups are evident in mortality from lung cancer, coronary heart disease and cerebrovasculic disease."

Some critics of the report have suggested that it does not show the neglect in health care provided for the low-paid, but simply demonstrates that the low-paid are inherently unhealthy and that they are increasing in numbers. To argue that case is not to refute the report, but to confirm its basic premise. Low-income families are at greater risk from illness. Unemployment has increased to almost 4 million. Families living on or below the supplementary benefit level have increased by 50 per cent. to nearly 9 million during the lifetime of the Government. The health care of those families in special need, who should have been compensated for their deprivation, has been scandalously neglected.

I shall give one example—if pressed I shall gladly give more—of the coincidence between low employment and low subsistence levels and standards of health care. In Liverpool, over the past eight years, 22 per cent. of the total number of jobs has been lost. At the same time, in that area of unique deprivation, the Merseyside hospital authority has lost 16 per cent. of its hospital beds.

The tragedy of that situation is that the deprivation is transmitted from generation to generation. That is the message of every survey ever conducted into deprivation in this country. That is why the National Childrens Bureau once wrote of children in the inner cities that they were "born to fail." That is the meaning of the cycle of deprivation, about which the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) used to lecture us 10 years ago.

By dividing the nation the Government are prejudicing the prospects and destroying the hopes of both deprived and dispossessed members of this generation, and are doing exactly the same damage to their children and grandchildren. It is above all that reason — the permanent damage that it has done, and is doing, to this country — that makes the Conservative party wholly unfit to govern.

4.10 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, to leave out from "notes" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"the Government's commitment to seeing all citizens of the United Kingdom share in the increased prosperity and improved public services resulting from the economic policies it is pursuing and applauds the Government's continuing commitment to the principles of one nation.".

The speech that we have just heard from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was widely billed in some of this morning's newspapers as the relaunch of the Labour party in advance of the general election. If that is what was intended, it seems to me that the already melting number of Labour Members is a poor turnout for this great occasion.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I am going, too.

Mr. Clarke: This is an Opposition Supply day. I have no doubt that Opposition Members have made the same decision as a high proportion of Members of the House — namely, that that story has all been heard before, and, as has just been revealed, the relaunch is a relaunch of all the same ideas and all the same policies, rehashed in the usual way.

The first stage of the rocket got off to a bad start. Having arrived at the last moment, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook seemed to be a little flustered and breathless, no doubt having just had a good lunch in the City, which I do not begrudge him. Having failed to notice the leader of the Social Democratic party, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), in his place only four seats away, the right hon. Gentleman threw away a good joke. I suspect that the failure to see the right hon. Member for Devonport was a Freudian slip; a case of wishful thinking in view of the present state of play in the opinion polls. I advise the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to get a little more used to that gap along the Front Bench because, from the Government Benches, it seems that the two right hon. Members will be changing seats after the election and that the right hon. Member for Devonport will speak from the Dispatch Box, while the Labour party will have moved below the Gangway. That will be the Labour party's fate if the attack on the Government's policy that the Opposition motion represents is pursued. It is fundamentally mistaken.

I refer, first, to the allegations about the Government in the Opposition motion. The Government are committed to encouraging a society in which wealth is created, a society in which that wealth creation benefits all our citizens, and a society which offers equality of opportunity, above all, to all its citizens. Our concern is to ensure that our people are better off, that they all enjoy rising standards of living, a better quality and quantity of health, better quality education and better public services, all of which we are achieving.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: Of course, that does not imply that what we are seeking to create is a uniform society in which there are no differences. To some extent, differences are bound to exist. Those differences will change, and always do change, in any society as the economy changes. It will always be the case, and always has been, that at any given moment some industries in some areas may prosper and develop more than elsewhere. Over any given period, earnings in some occupations will rise more than others because skills and talents in limited supply will be rewarded more highly. That is inevitable. It is part of the process of society in history.

However, differences are not the same as divisions, and people who try to elevate the differences that exist into divisions within a society are doing that society a gross disservice. Socialists have always based their politics and their approach to politics on an emphasis on the divisions in society. It is in their interests to paint those divisions in exaggerated colours. They need to point to divisions in society as the justification for state activity to tax and spend on particular interests.

Conservatives, on the other hand—members of the present Government—do not believe in huge inequalities in income or differences in lifestyle. As I have said, we believe, and we have always stated that we believe, in equality of opportunity. We believe in the stability of

society that the idea of "one nation"—a classic Tory philosophy—creates. As every trade unionist knows who has argued about differentials, as all trade unionists have at some time, differences of income have a purpose in society. They encourage people to develop the skills that are in demand. They provide incentives for people to advance, to lead and to change society for the better.

Let me give an example. I find it odd that the party that talks with concern about the brain drain complains about all wider income differences. Surely we all recognise that a major response to such a problem is to raise the incomes of top scientists and, if possible, to reduce their tax rates. The Labour party says, "Give them more facilities, but bring back punitive tax rates." Would that stop the brain drain? I beg to differ. Our policy would produce bigger earnings differences, but it would also encourage scientists to work and create more wealth in our society, and that is beneficial for everyone.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): What about the nurses?

Mr. Clarke: The nurses have had a bigger increase in their real living standards in recent years under the Government than they had under the Labour Government. Their living standards fell under the Labour Government.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and I are back in harness again today, and we well remember the strike in the Health Service, supported by the Labour party, when the biggest objection that the Labour party and trade unions had to the settlement that we were endeavouring to make was that we were paying the nurses a bigger increase than was paid to people in the unions affiliated to the Labour party. That strike was extended by the Labour party because it did not want us to pay more to nurses than to the people in the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees, to which the Labour party is so indebted. We set up the review body. We have given a real increase in living standards to nurses, and the Labour party tried to block every step along the way. I am talking about inequalities in income and the higher position of nurses in the earnings league table. That is a product of what we have done.

The mistake that is made over and over again by the Opposition is to assume that any changes that widen differences, as long as they are not called differentials, are always harmful, but such changes can be beneficial to everyone in society—I stress, everyone—simply because total wealth and income are raised. If one uses incentives and rewards intelligently, everyone can share in that growth. Someone has to create wealth before the politicians fall to sharing that wealth out.

I know that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not agree. It would be surprising if he did. We would not be on opposite sides of the House if we agreed. The right hon. Gentleman made it most clear in the post-mortem of the Labour party's election defeat, when he went on a "Newsnight" special on 31 July 1983 and said:

> "We are not the party of equality of opportunity. That is a view of society of the Conservative party . . . We are the party of equalty of outcome".

That was the main thrust of what the right hon. Gentleman said today. The result was that he made a great deal in his speech, when he got down to it, and spoke eloquently of the faster earnings growth of the better off in society. Obviously, he objected to that.

If we look at the percentage changes in real take-home pay while the Government have been in office, it is true that between 1978-79 and 1987-88 people on five times average earnings enjoyed real increases in pay greater than those on half average earnings. We took away all the higher, punitive rates; I do not deny that. As a result, those on five times average earnings received an increase in real take-home pay of 38 per cent., compared to an increase of 20 per cent. for those on half average earnings. People at every level of earnings received a remarkable increase in take-home pay.

Perhaps single people on half average earnings would have preferred the position under Labour between 1973-74 and 1978-79, when they did better compared to those on five times average earnings. However, it is only a comparison between the two periods. Between 1973-74 and 1978-79 the low earners lost only 1 per cent. in real take-home pay, while those on five times the average lost 18·5 per cent. The Labour party was happier when its policies resulted in everyone becoming poorer in terms of take-home pay, but the very low-paid becoming poorer at a slower rate than the very highly paid.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made much of the fact that a higher proportion of earnings is paid in tax now than in 1979.

Mr. Hattersley: If the figures that the Minister has quoted are correct, why do the Treasury tables published in the second week of January show that the lowest decile had increases of only 3·5 per cent. over the appropriate period? That does not even meet the increase in inflation as measured by the low-income inflation index.

Mr. Clarke: The earnings of the lowest decile—that is those who at one time are in the lowest 10 per cent. of earnings; it is not the same people all the time—kept pace with inflation. I have the answer here, unlike the right hon. Gentleman, who was making such convoluted comparisons that he had to read his text especially carefully when he came to his earnings and taxation figures. He is being highly selective. He knows perfectly well that a comparison of the period from 1973-74 to 1978-79 with that from 1979 to now shows that the entire population have received much larger increases in take-home pay recently than they did under Labour, and that significant sections of the population suffered actual decreases under Labour. Equal misery was the policy of the last Labour Government. People are now sharing in growing prosperity.

Mr. Hattersley: I ask a simple question. Are the Treasury figures right, or wrong? During the Government's term of office, have average earnings in the lowest decile increased by 3·5 per cent.? That is a simple statistical question. Is the answer yes, or no? If it is yes, all that the Minister said a moment ago is nonsense.

Mr. Clarke: The answer is yes, but all that I said a moment ago is not nonsense. Those people have received a real increase.

Mr. Hattersley: An increase of 3·5 per cent. in eight years?

Mr. Clarke: That is much better than what the Labour party achieved. The figures that I quoted for those on half average earnings and those on five times the average, and the figures for married and for single people across the incomes bracket, are vastly better in terms of take-home

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pay than anything achieved during the years of total economic failure under the last Labour Government. The partial quotations given by the right hon. Gentleman cannot conceal that.

The right hon. Gentleman also made much of the fact that a higher proportion of earnings is now paid in tax than in 1979, and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is anxious to repeat that allegation. I find complaints about the high level of tax a somewhat curious tactic for the Labour party to employ. One of the daftest moments that I recall in the Chamber during the past few months—indeed, one of the daftest moments for several years—was when the Leader of the Opposition attacked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during Question Time for her policy of high taxation. Those who believe that the Labour party is criticising us for reducing taxation too much should note that on 12 February—it is at column 456 of the *Official Report*—the Leader of the Opposition called my right hon. Friend "high-taxer Thatcher". That contrasts rather with the reaction to the Budget by the Labour party and, indeed, the Liberal and Social Democratic parties.

The figures for take-home pay that I have just cited show that those in work are much better off now that they are paying a higher proportion of their higher incomes in taxation. The secret behind what we all realise is a great increase in living standards for those in work is that real earnings have risen substantially, whereas they did not rise before we began the economic revival. We have experienced such a significant rate of economic growth, and such a significant increase in real earnings, that people in work are very much better off. They can afford to pay more taxes, and those taxes are being used to provide better public services.

When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was making his tax comparisons, he neglected, in his excitement, to mention that if the present tax system were the same as the system in 1979, people would be paying a much higher proportion of their incomes in tax.

Mr. Hattersley: The Minister is rehearsing the passage, which I anticipated, about how well the economy is doing. Will he answer the question that I related to that? If we are doing so well, why can we not afford to pay pensioners an increase related to average earnings?

Mr. Clarke: We have more than maintained the real value of the pension at a time when the number of pensioners has increased by 1 million, as we did throughout the economic recession that dogged the first two years of our period of office, when we were assigned to sort out the mess left behind. I shall return to the question of pensioners in a moment. The right hon. Gentleman will not then laugh at our record on pensions compared to that of his Government. Pensioners, along with the rest of society, have benefited considerably from the improved prosperity that we now enjoy.

I have dealt with the right hon. Gentleman's points about incomes and tax. I do not believe that rising real incomes for those in work are the answer to everything. In my present job, I am acutely aware of the danger that increasing real incomes may go only to those in work and that growth in the economy may pass by the unemployed — especially the long-term unemployed. We cannot allow society to divide into a group of insiders becoming better off in work, and a group of outsiders remaining in low incomes for long periods. Pay bargaining can easily reflect that, particularly the kind of pay bargaining often encouraged by the Labour party.

The reason why academics often ask why pay restraint has taken a long time to be achieved, despite high unemployment, is that trade unions and employers have no interest in remembering the long-term unemployed when negotiating settlements, but that has been the whole point of our policies on employment, work experience and training for the last two or three years. We must ensure that the long-term unemployed—indeed, all unemployed people — do not become outsiders. We want to take them back into the main stream of the economy. The measures that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and I keep pushing forward are intended to achieve that in a more purposeful way than has so far been attempted. We have also concentrated on regional differences and the inner cities in all our activities in the Department of Employment, the Manpower Services Commission and wide parts of the Government. We have an ambitious range of employment and training measures to ensure that the unemployed are drawn back into the labour market to enjoy the benefits already enjoyed by those in work.

We are spending about £3 billion this year, and we are spending it where it is most needed. In the present financial year the Manpower Services Commission has spent roughly twice as much per head of the labour force in the areas—usually categorised as the north, but to be found in various parts of the country—where the decline of traditional manufacturing industry has had the greatest effect on jobs, as it has spent elsewhere. We are targeting our policies to ensure that divisions in society are not created and to ensure that the more prosperous economy that we are producing provides benefits for those who might otherwise be excluded.

Our spending has been concentrated on the young and the long-term unemployed. We know that every young person needs training, and a sound introduction to working life, as soon as he leaves school. That is what we offer through the YTS, on which every 16 and 17-year-old school leaver is now guaranteed a place, so that none of them need be unemployed any longer.

Many of the long-term unemployed need personal help, and we provide that in our restart interviews, which are intended to help them return to the labour market. From now on we offer that help, on an individual and personal basis — man-to-man, woman-to-woman or woman-to-man—every six months. In this way we shall be giving direct help to over 1 million people.

The problems that many long-term unemployed face in terms of illiteracy, poor education and a real lack of skill are being tackled by the Government through the job training scheme and job clubs. People are being given motivation and skills to help them back to work. We are also finding new ways to tackle inner-city problems. In the inner-cities initiative we are combining the resources of central Government with the private sector, and with the talents of individual residents, to create opportunities for enterprise and employment in the rundown inner areas of some of our large cities.

That package of measures cannot be challenged. Each of those policies, all of which are aimed at reducing the

divisions in our society and helping the disadvantaged, has been belittled and attacked by the Labour party, not least by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment.

When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is not making his "one nation" speech he is fond of attacking all those measures, and he tries to draw on his experience in his own constituency. I am not sure whether the right hon. Gentleman has ever lived in Sparkbrook. I lived for six years in what is now his Sparkbrook constituency. However, I am glad to say that the boundary commissioners did not include my ward in his Sparkbrook constituency, so I was never represented by him. I remember Sparkbrook in the 1960s. It was the first area in any city to which the phrase "inner-city policy" was applied. The Sparkbrook initiative goes back 20 years, when the right hon. Gentleman was first elected. Therefore, his claim that the deprivation in Sparkbrook has been created by Thatcherism and the Tory Government is a little wide of the mark to those who know the area that he represents.

It is not true that every part of the right hon. Gentleman's constituency is deprived. The areas that will be served by the city technology college are not so deprived as the prosperous bits of Moseley that fall inside his constituency. However, this is not the time to give the right hon. Gentleman an A to Z to Birmingham, in an effort to fend off those who are fighting to deselect him as the Member for Parliament for Sparkbrook. When he attacks job clubs and the restart programme, and when his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)—who is not here today—calls the YTS a "skivvy" scheme and tries to undermine all that we are doing for the long-term unemployed, they do damage to the residents of Sparkbrook, and of Peckham, and to people in the north. After listening to today's speech by the right hon. Gentlman, it is clear that the Labour party has no alternative to offer those who find themselves in that position.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): If the Minister is so keen on the restart programme, will he remember that on Merseyside 28,175 people were interviewed under the Government scheme but that only 295 were placed in jobs? That is a 1 per cent. success rate in an area of massively high youth unemployment. Furthermore, youth unemployment is fuelling the drugs problem in that area.

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman tables a question about that matter—he may already have done so—I shall make yet another attempt to clarify that point, as I do for every Opposition Member. The figure to which the hon. Gentleman referred relates to those who have been directly placed in jobs after an interview. I have explained over and over again that that is no measure of those who find work after training, under the enterprise allowance scheme, and all the other opportunities that they are given. This is yet another example of a Labour Member of Parliament seeking to belittle a highly successful scheme, simply because Opposition Members are terrified that we shall be seen to be successful in reducing the number of long-term unemployed. Long-term unemployment is being reduced. In fact, as a result of all Government's policies it has been coming down for the past six months.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, the Labour party wishes to have a debate about alienation, division and deprivation in our society. Will he tell the House why it is that alienation, poverty, unemployment and deprivation are far worse in Labour-controlled local authority areas than they are in the rest of the country?

Mr. Clarke: It is partly because of the poverty in some of those areas, but in many of them it is due to the policies of Labour-controlled local authorities, not all of which are in London. They contribute to the problem and do nothing to try to eliminate it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment.

The Labour Government have nothing to contribute by way of an alternative to those schemes. We are giving training, work experience and opportunities to the young and the long-term unemployed. We are also tackling the inner-city problems. The right hon. Gentleman's solution to heal the divisions in our society is to tax the rich and to spend that money on the poor. That is a beguilingly straightforward solution.

In a speech last year the right hon. Gentleman announced for the first time that the Labour party would use the £3·6 billion that it claimed, slightly erroneously, had been given in tax cuts to the most highly paid 5 per cent. in our country, to raise the level of state benefits for various groups of voters. As the two are sitting side by side today, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should check with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) what is the Labour party's policy, because it seems from the speeches of the hon. Member for Oldham, West that he would use some of the same money for a domestic insulation programme and for winter premiums to help to pay fuel bills. They ought to sort out the divisions in their own ranks and stop spending the same money twice—except that that would reveal that, between them, the Labour shadow Cabinet has pledged to increase public spending by about £34 billion, which would bankrupt the national economy.

I was asked about pensioners. I am sure that everybody wants more money to be spent on pensioners. However, I am sure also that pensioners recognise that the country can spend money in this way only when it has earned it by creating more wealth. We have more than maintained the real value of the pension, although there are 1 million more pensioners and the country has been emerging from a recession.

When the Opposition refer to the divisions in our society, they always forget to mention that between 1979 and 1985 the average net income for pensioners rose by 18 per cent.—an average annual rate of just under 3 per cent. That means that those above retirement age have, as a group, done well under this Government and that they can expect to continue to do well. *[Interruption.]* Of course the world is changing. I want to see good occupational pensions. The Labour party wants people to have just the state pension and state benefit. According to the Labour party, if it is not state benefit it does not count.

As a group, pensioners have been growing more prosperous. A major reason for that is our pledge to keep inflation low. That is where the real weakness lies in the Opposition's policies. The ravages of inflation in the past

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and the havoc that it created for so many vulnerable members of our society have been too easily forgotten by some members of the public. The Opposition seem to regard as a matter of no consequence the inevitable rise in inflation that would result from their spending policies. Inflation is one of the most divisive and unfair influences that any society can inflict upon itself.

One key to an examination of inflation as a problem in any debate about the inequalities in our society is that inflation robs the weak and gives to the strong. It harms the saver; it does not harm the borrower. It harms the pensioner; it does not harm the high earner. It harms all those who are unable to adjust their incomes quickly to rising inflation. The yuppie with the big mortgage, the big overdraft and the high earnings will do well out of inflation, if he keeps his job.

If one talks to many pensioners who are now in their 70s or 80s, one discovers how they were made poorer than they need have been by the hyper-inflation of the Lib-Lab Government of the 1970s, which robbed them of their savings and destroyed the value of the fixed occupational pensions which they had expected to enjoy. The inflation caused by the last Labour Government was one of the most divisive influences in our society and created more poverty than all their spending policies helped to cure. I see no reason why that should change.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am glad that the Paymaster General has referred to inflation. Will he explain why *Lloyds Bank Review*, published this morning, considers that the Government's record on inflation, relative to other countries, is worse than that of the last Labour Government's? Will he also explain why, in his stupefyingly complacent speech, he has not once explained that the Government's unemployment record is the worst of all other major industrialised countries, bar one?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman does not often drop his voice at the end of a sentence, so I assume that there is some magic in the little phrase "compared with other countries." If he is trying to claim that the Government's record on inflation vis-a-vis the previous Labour Government's record, and that of the Lib-Lab Government, is poorer it is totally incredible. It is relative to other countries, so it may be that during the 1970s, if one looks at some of the wilder countries — perhaps Italy, Argentina, Uraguay and Brazil had fantastic inflation — the double-figure inflation of the Labour party can by comparison, be made to appear respectable. The fact is that we now have low single-figure inflation.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: My point, which the hon. Gentleman does not like — hence he is trying to go back to weird international comparisons—is that if the Labour party's policies, as they would with £34 billion public expenditure, produce high inflation, that would impoverish pensioners, cause poverty and recreate divisions in society far beyond those that it is contriving to complain about today.

Mr. Simon Hughes: How does the Paymaster General reconcile his statement of abhorrence of inflation with the fact that, since his Government came to office, we have seen the numbers of homeless inflated to 100,000, house prices in the inner city areas inflated out of reach of ordinary people—it is £2·5 million in my constituency for a penthouse flat — and unemployment in the so-called targeted inner cities inflated to 30 per cent., as it is in constituencies such as mine? How is that reconcilable with his great virtuous principles about inflation?

Mr. Clarke: We have had many debates about unemployment and the hon. Gentleman has attended many of them. We know that in 1979, 1980 and 1981 unemployment rose dreadfully under the impact of the oil price increase and world recession, and under the impact of the over-manning and inefficient state in which we inherited British industry, the level insupportable of subsidy that sustained that industry, and the fact that the country's economy was left at the end of the 1970s in a state in which it could not withstand international competition. He also knows that from 1981 we have steadily recovered, that since 1983 we have created over 1 million additional jobs and that unemployment is now coming down steadily. It came down by a record-breaking amount only last month. We are, as I explained earlier, seeking to extend that into the inner cities.

The fundamental belief underlying Labour's programme on poverty and on jobs and the Liberal's policy on jobs, remains the belief that more public spending is the best way to create jobs and solve what they see as the ills of our society. That fundamental belief is fundamentally nonsense. It does not mean that one should never increase public spending. We have increased public spending on our public services where they require it. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook selected various services to try to disprove that.

Mr. Raynsford *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way shortly, but I have given way quite a lot.

At the weekend, in one of the Sunday newspapers, I saw a specimen of one of the advertisements that the Labour party will put out to try to show that somehow, in the recovery of our economy, public services have been cut back. It was an advertisement about health care, so it took me back to the days when I worked for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. The Labour Health Service advertisement had a marvellous series of slogans stating that there were "Less beds", "Less staff" and "Less hospitals" and that the Tories could not care less. If the Labour party is to challenge educational standards, it should use the English language correctly. The word "fewer" would have been correct. Leaving that aside, I advise the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, in the launch, to stop relying on the old stuff from the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

With the statement "Less beds", the hon. Member for Oldham, West is still relying on the furniture as a measure of how the Health Service is performing. Presumably he arrives at "Less staff" by not counting those working for private contractors because they are not on the Health Service payroll. He refers to "Less hospitals". He still thinks that if one closes two old Victorian buildings and replaces them with one big modern hospital one is reducing the service. I am sure that when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services replies to the debate he will point out that during the past seven years we have put more money into the Health Service, employed more doctors and nurses, and most important, treated many more patients. That is the result of well

judged public spending. A key part of the Chancellor's Budget strategy this year was the great increase in public spending that we were able to announce, particularly on health and education. It was first announced in the autumn statement last year.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way? I did ask earlier.

Mr. Clarke: I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

The whole experience of the 1960s and 1970s should have taught us that public spending beyond what the economy can afford will not tackle the problems of either unemployment or low income. Indeed, the combination of higher interest rates due to more borrowing, and higher taxation and higher inflation, which will inevitably flow from the increase in public spending, will make people worse off and reduce jobs.

Mr. Raynsford: I grant that in one area of policy there has been a significant increase in spending recently. We have seen it in expenditure on bed-and-breakfast hotels. Will the Paymaster General tell the House why it is better to spend more money on bed-and-breakfast squalor for homeless families than it would require to build brand new homes that would put people back to work while building them and provide people with better housing?

Mr. Clarke: No one wants to see money spent on expensive bed-and-breakfast provision. If the Labour local authorities, particularly in London, could tackle the 110,000 empty houses in council ownership, we might make some progress in dealing with that problem as well.

I was referring to the higher taxation and higher inflation that are likely to make people worse off and reduce jobs. I accept that both the Opposition parties have an answer of sorts to the inflationary problems that their policies would create. The Labour party has a particular problem because of its relationship with the unions. That is made worse by its clear commitment to repeal all our industrial relations legislation. If Labour were in office it would be easier to strike, easier to take secondary action, there would be no need for strike ballots, no restrictions on picketing, and so on. That will make it difficult in inflationary times, as the Labour party is putting up public spending and increasing taxation.

That could make it impossible to achieve what David Currie and Maurice Peston said in their article in the *New Statesman* on "Labour's better way". As everybody knows, David Currie and Maurice Peston are the two professors of economics who are largely the authors of Labour's so-called jobs plan. They pointed out what they thought was essential. They said:

"We must keep the inflation rate under control. That means a planned policy for incomes, not least in the private sector."

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook would agree with that, except when he is on a Labour party platform, because in a post-mortem of Labour's last election defeat he described in *Tribune* on 29 July 1983 what was wrong with Labour's policy. He said:

"our economic policy was deficient"—

I do not see the difference between what it was then and what it is now—

"and . . . was made literally incredible to the public. . . We flinched from saying what every sensible person knew that to run the economy in the way which we hoped, which was to have a measure of planning, which would give expansion and full employment without inflation, we had to come to an agreement with the trade unions about incomes."

Presumably what happened was the great meeting last week, with terrific fanfares during the preliminaries of the relaunch. "The national economic assessment" was revealed by the Labour party and the Trades Union Congress as an anti-inflationary device. I have to read what it is called, because I remember it as the "social contracts" and I am sure that it is most familiar to members of the public by that name.

The Liberals and the Social Democrats are also clearly pledged to go back to another old favourite in order to cure inflation, which also failed when excessive public spending and wage explosions last caused trouble. They are firmly committed to a statutory incomes policy based on a Government dictated "norm", with penalties for deviation. The present Government do not need the old-fashioned quack remedies of the Opposition, because we have cured the disease of inflation. We have increased public spending—as we have—only after we have first achieved the growth in the economy to pay for it. At the moment inflation is in low single figures. Our unit wage costs are not going up any faster, at long last, than those of our competitors. Therefore, the Opposition do not need the social contract or statutory incomes policies to deal with present problems. They are having to advocate these things to protect themselves against the inevitable consequences of the other policies which the Labour and Liberal parties are advocating, which would bring back inflation, higher taxation and so on.

To move on to what was most missing from the speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, I point out that the clearest symbol of the difference in outlook between us and the Opposition lies in our attitudes to ownership. That has not been mentioned so far. The concept of ownership no longer features in Opposition speeches, but most members of the public think of ownership as much as incomes when they consider class and other divisions in our society. Socialists used to major on state ownership as a key feature of their egalitarian aims. Now, they have lost confidence in that completely. Our aim has been to spread owernership of houses, of shares, and of pensions as widely as possible. I suspect that the Opposition hankers after a rigid class system in which the mass of people still vote Socialist because they have no stake in anything.

The way to reduce differences within our society and to widen the opportunities open to our citizens is to spread ownership as widely as possible—ownership in houses, shares and pensions. Some 2·5 million more households own their own homes than in 1979. The tenants' right to buy will ensure that this number continues to rise. Over 5 million more people own shares now than in 1979, with the increase in share ownership widely spread across social groups, and the most marked increase among the less well off. Now, about a fifth of the adult population own shares. Our continued programme of privatisation and the new personal equity plans will ensure that share ownership continues to increase. Personal pensions will add to this sense of ownership and opportunity. Personal pension plans will mean that individuals can have much more control over the way in which their own pension contributions are invested, and will widen their range of choice about both pensions and jobs.

The Government are committed to helping all our citizens share in improved prospects, both in personal incomes and in public services. This can be achieved only through the ability of our economy to create wealth. It is economic growth which can enable us to enjoy higher

[Mr. Clarke]

personal incomes which can both bear the weight of more spending on personal services and give us greater personal disposable income.

Within the opportunities created by the sound economic growth that we are now enjoying, we are committed to doing everything that we can to help the unemployed into jobs, by raising their work experience, skill and motivation. We shall continue to target income support and benefits on the most vulnerable groups in our society. Above all, we are committed to popular capitalism. Spreading wealth more widely in houses, in shares and in pensions will both give people more control over their own lives and give them more opportunity and incentive.

I believe that the strategy of faster economic growth, direct help to the unemployed, better public services, paid for by the wealth that our economy can create, and wider ownership are the best route to one nation. It is the greatest cynicism that the Opposition motion refers to "one nation" as though it is a concept suddenly discovered by them. I have always been a one-nation Tory, and I always will be. The Government, judged by any view of their record, are a one-nation Government. On that account, our amendment should be supported, and the motion rejected.

4.53 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The Paymaster General is asking that we should agree that the House

"notes the Government's commitment to seeing all citizens of the United Kingdom share in the increased prosperity and improved public services".

The indictment of the Paymaster General and the Government is that all citizens have not shared equally in that increase in prosperity.

Mr. Marlow: It does not say "equally".

Dr. Owen: Exactly. The criticism is that they should have shared equally in it. The hon. Gentleman is open about the fact that his is not an egalitarian party. We are saying that people should have shared far more equally, and, in particular, those people in the direst poverty and those out of work should have been given a greater share of the nation's resources during that time.

That is a major political division across the Floor of the House. It is reflected in the fact that over 60 per cent. of the people do not support the policies of the Government. Therefore, I shall have to direct quite a lot of my attention to persuading those 60 per cent. that the SDP-Liberal alliance has the best policies for achieving that objective, which is to ensure a fairer and more just society. Before I do that, let us deal with a few of the facts.

Let us look at what has happened to incomes between 1976 and 1984. First, the poorest, the bottom 5 per cent. of households, have seen their share of total disposable income, after allowing for taxes and benefits, decline from 7 per cent. to just 6·7 per cent. At the other extreme, the richest one fifth improved their share from 38·1 per cent. to 39·7 per cent. Tax cuts, since the change of Government in 1979, have favoured the rich, and Conservative Members would say that that was deliberate. While income tax plus national insurance contributions as a proportion of gross income has increased for the vast majority of earners between 1978-79 and 1986-87, it has decreased significantly for higher earners, and it is that imbalance that I shall attack.

Let us deal, first, because the debate has not concentrated sufficiently on them, with those in poverty. Let us take those who, by any fair standard, are not well off—those living on supplementary benefit. Although it has increased and improved, any hon. Member who has tried living on supplementary benefit has come away saying that it is immensely hard to make ends meet.

Official figures show that the numbers living on or near the poverty line, as assessed by supplementary benefit level, increased from 11·5 million in 1979 to 16·6 million in 1985. That is a staggering increase by any standard. Nobody would wish to deny that that is a substantial increase in the number of people who have been forced, through many circumstances, not least unemployment, to live on insufficient levels of income.

With his customary courtesy, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has left the Chamber, so the view of inequality from Gayfere street, which we are used to hearing——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is tea time.

Dr. Owen: That may be so. First of all, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook cannot recognise me sitting in the Chamber. He then makes a rather well prepared joke somewhat ineffectively. It is customary to listen to the speeches made immediately before and after one's own, but let us leave that subject. However, I will not allow his absence to prevent me from examining in some detail the Labour party's proposals for dealing with poverty, and those of the alliance.

It appears, from everything that the Paymaster General said, that he does not wish to defend the Government's record on poverty. The Secretary of State for Social Services, who will be replying to the debate, I believe, wanted to grapple with the problems of poverty and of the tax and benefits system in a much more imaginative way that he was allowed to do. He must know, looking and dealing with the anomalies of the system day by day, that the need is to integrate the tax and benefits systems. That was the judgment of a former Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Anthony Barber, now in the other place. That has been the judgment of most who have ever looked at the system. Everyone knows that if one is to integrate the two systems, there has to be an injection of new money to overcome the anomalies.

The alliance believes that its policies for attacking poverty and the strategy that it has developed are far more effective in concentrating resources on those who most need them than anything that has been proposed by the Labour party. By going for selectivity rather than for universal benefits, we shall be able to target far more resources on the poor, yet cost the Exchequer less. Therefore, it is far more likely that our plan will be introduced. Our proposal does not stem from a vindictive or envious view of society. It has been deliberately aimed so that it will not hit hard or punish those people on above average earnings. It is notable that, in our alternative Budget, the only tax that would be increased is the tax on those people claiming mortgage interest tax relief over and above the standard rate of tax.

There is only one way to deal with the present position, and that is to be selective and to consider the tax and

benefit systems overall. First of all, let us consider the cost of the Labour party's programme for dealing with poverty.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: No. I want to develop my argument first.

The cost of the Labour party's programme is £4·7 billion. Some £3·6 billion comes from the Labour party's decision to raise child benefit, to introduce a one-parent family benefit and to raise the pension for everyone and the winter premium. The remaining £1·1 billion comes from a national minimum wage of £80 a week. I believe that that figure has been conservatively estimated. It does not take account of the extraordinary effect that increasing the minimum wage will have on differentials when negotiators strive to maintain the differentials. The cost of the minimum wage is far more extravagant than has currently been thought through. What is more, it will not deal with the serious problem of the person on low wages with many children in the family.

Let us consider the alliance strategy and compare it with Labour's. We thought that child benefit should go up by only £1 a week because that goes to everyone. We are also determined to make it available to unemployed families, thereby concentrating that addition on people who are already suffering. Therefore, as well as going to those in work, that benefit would go to unemployed families as a result of our new basic benefit reform. Therefore, unemployed families — the poorest in our society — under the alliance proposals will be £8·25 a week gross better off or £4·25 a week net with no change to free school meals or milk. That is far better than what the Labour party hopes to achieve.

When we consider basic benefit, we will add £5 a week to the new family credit, replacing family income supplement which the Secretary of State will introduce in 1988, and income support replacing supplementary benefit, thus helping those in work and the unemployed. Basic benefit is withdrawn as income rises, so targeting resources where they are needed most. The effect is that families in work will be £6 a week better off with one child —£5 plus £1 child benefit increase. Unemployed families will be £9·25 a week better off with one child—£5 plus £4·25 child benefit. Those benefits are substantially better than those produced by the Labour party.

The basic pension will increase under the alliance proposals by £2·30 a week for a single pensioner and by £3·65 a week for a couple. Again, pensioners with no other income, like others, will receive an extra £3·70 a week for a single person and £5·75 a week for a couple. That means in total that the poorer pensioners — I do not believe that we pay enough attention to those people living on the basic pension as we sometimes concentrate too much on those drawing supplementary benefit; the 2 million people between supplementary benefit and the basic pension have suffered the worst, in my view—will receive £6 a week under the alliance proposals for a single person and £9·40 a week for a married couple. Again, those proposals are far better than the Labour party's proposals.

Mr. Lilley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: No; I am trying to develop my argument.

The fourth item that must be addressed is the question of the long-term unemployed. We still intend to give long-term supplementary benefit rates to long-term childless couples and the unemployed. That will provide an extra £8·10 a week for a single person and £11·25 a week for a couple who have been out of work for 12 months or more. Most people have accepted that the long-term unemployed suffer seriously from poverty. We must have a mechanism to concentrate extra benefit on them.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: No.

The cost of those proposals is £2·2 billion over two years, less the saving for mortgage tax relief of £0·4 million. That is less than the cost of the Labour party's plan and it can be financed within the Budget strategy that the alliance identifies. That makes sense.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Dr. Owen: I believe that that makes sense, and it is far better in concrete and specific terms than anything that Labour has proposed.

Mr. Meacher: I am sure that the House will be grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that exposition. That was the third or fourth statement of SDP plans and it is difficult to know which is being referred to or whether there is bound to be another when further anomalies have been found. On the first occasion, £600 million was added to the original plan to stop people——

Dr. Owen: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is asking a question, and consequently I shall continue my speech.

Mr. Meacher *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The right hon. Gentleman had given way. Mr. Michael Meacher.

Mr. Meacher: As the right hon. Gentleman raised five points, I shall ask him five questions.

Dr. Owen: This is an intrusion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Having given way, the right hon. Gentleman must allow the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to intervene. Mr. Michael Meacher—briefly, please.

Mr. Meacher: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us how he reaches his figure of £4·7 billion when there has been no negotiated figure for the national minimum wage? Secondly——

Dr. Owen: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman should have heard what I said. He must not persist. There is only one occupant of the Chair at a time in this place. The right hon. Gentleman must not persist. Mr. Michael Meacher—briefly, please.

Mr. Meacher: Secondly, does the right hon. Gentleman realise that child benefit already goes to the unemployed? He does not appear to understand that basic point. Thirdly, if he proposes a basic benefit for combined supplementary benefit and family income supplement, how does he explain the fact that that will greatly worsen the poverty trap?

Dr. Owen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can we have a ruling from the Chair as to the length of time an intervention can be made in——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already given a ruling. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not persist. He is only delaying his own speech and the proceedings. Mr. Michael Meacher, very briefly please.

Mr. Meacher: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that under his proposal the long-term unemployed would receive £8 and £11 while under our proposal there would be a 25 per cent. increase of £12 a week?

Fifthly how does the right hon. Gentleman explain that the cost will be as low as £2 billion when we believe it will be nearer to £3 billion or £4 billion?

Dr. Owen: I hope that Mr. Speaker, when he looks at *Hansard*, will give some thought as to—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Owen *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has been a Member of this House and has held senior positions over a long period. I very much hope that he will respect the Chair and the rulings of the Chair. Mr. Winnick, on a point of order.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not the long-established custom of the House that when a right hon. or hon. Member gives way, if the hon. Member making the intervention carries on for too long it is the Chair's responsibility? It has happened time and again and the Chair has ruled accordingly. Is not the right hon. Gentleman's behaviour arrogant and totally unacceptable in this House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not ungrateful for the support that appears to be given to the Chair. However, I remind the right hon. Member for Devonport that I hope he is not reflecting on the conduct or rulings of the Chair. He has been a Member of the House long enough to know that he must not do that.

Dr. Owen: I am certainly not reflecting on the conduct of the Chair.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have no intention of attempting to wreck the right hon. Gentleman's speech; he is doing that on his own. However, when a challenge has clearly been made to your ruling, is not a withdrawal called for and should not an apology be given?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not quite sure that I should be grateful for the apparent help that is being offered to the Chair.

Dr. Owen: I shall answer one of the questions asked by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). He asked about the costing of the programme. The costings of child benefit, one-parent benefit, pensions and the winter premium—£3·6 billion—were made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook in a speech to the British Institute of Management. The £4·7 billion is achieved by adding the £1·1 billion figure for the minimum wage which was given in *Hansard* on 6 November and which I said was a conservative estimate which slightly underestimates the charge. I hope that that deals with the hon. Gentleman's question.

I return to other areas of inequality. I shall know not to give way to the hon. Member for Oldham, West in future.

Mr. Lilley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: No. I shall get on with my speech.

The other question that needs to be raised is the burden of tax. The Paymaster General ingeniously argued that because wages had increased, it was not valid to examine the share of the tax burden of an increased wage. However, it is legitimate to raise that question when we constantly hear from the Prime Minister about how the Government are cutting taxes. In fact, that is not the case. A single nurse on £170 per week is paying £7 more in tax than in 1979 and her tax burden is up by 8 per cent. The average family man on £227 per week, with two children, is paying £20 per week more in tax—at constant prices—than in 1979 and his tax burden is up by 6 per cent.

The family on half average earnings—£115 per week—has suffered a 33 per cent. increase in its direct tax burden alone since 1979. All these are Treasury figures set out in *Hansard* on 27 March this year. [*Interruption.*] No. The Government have produced these figures.

The Prime Minister said on "Panorama":

"I feel we owe quite a debt to the people in the bottom half. We have taken in my view too high a proportion of their income in tax".

With a large amount of money available to be given back in the Budget, one would have expected the Government to repay that debt, at least in part; but the debt is still unpaid. After this year's budget, a family of four on half of average earnings — £115 per week — will pay proportionately more than twice as much direct tax as it would have paid in 1978-79. Those are the facts.

Mr. Lilley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: No. I have given way quite enough, and after my recent experience I shall not give way again.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Dr. Owen: I have given the facts. If the Paymaster General wishes to question the Treasury figures that have been given in *Hansard*, he may do so.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: No. The right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke for a long time and enjoyed himself, as it was perfectly legitimate for him to do.

My next question——

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Dr. Owen: No. I am not giving way.

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that the right hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Dr. Owen: There are also inequalities in health, and again there is no thin ice, because the figures have largely been produced by the Government at the taxpayers' expense.

The Government have a rather depressing record. The present Secretary of State was not involved, but when faced with statistics and facts in the report produced by Sir Douglas Black, the Government tried to avoid publishing them because they exposed inequalities in the NHS. There

was no reason to do that in 1980. The previous Government could have been blamed for some of the inequalities.

The Government now seem to be upset about another report and are trying to avoid a wider public debate. We all ought to be worried about inequalities in the NHS and the evidence that there is a link between health and social class. There is always a time lag in statistics, but we have up-to-date figures showing that all-cause mortality between 1979 and 1983 fell for men and women and for manual and non-manual groups. However, mortality has declined more rapidly among non-manual groups.

There is also a strong social class bias in education. Among all 16 to 19-year-olds, a total of 37 per cent.— *[Interruption.]* These are the statistics produced by social class. The Government produced them and we must deal with them as we do as part of polling evidence. There is no point in backing away from them. The statistical office——

Mr. Lilley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the right hon. Gentleman has now started answering questions from a sedentary position, could you persuade him to answer those from hon. Members who have been seeking to intervene in a formal manner?

Dr. Owen *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise the Chair. A point of order has been addressed to me.

I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was standing when he was dealing with these matters.

Mr. Lilley: I was standing.

Dr. Owen: A total of 37 per cent. of 16 to 19-year-olds were in full-time education in 1984, but the proportion was as high as 72 per cent. among those with fathers in the professions and as low as 27 per cent. for the sons and daughters of semi-skilled or unskilled workers. The salutary fact is that in 1984 just 1 per cent. of those accepted into British universities came from the unskilled social class, 6 per cent. were from the semi-skilled class and 70 per cent. were from the top two social classes. Those class figures in education and some of the figures in health are worse in this country than in many comparable nations. Conservative Members may not want to face the facts, but we have to ask how we can overcome some of these difficulties.

We need to be able to direct resources to the areas most in need. The problem will not be dealt with by global increases to the NHS, though it is fair to point out that the Government, having had a reasonably good year in 1986-87, plan real-terms increases of only 1·5 per cent. in 1987-88, 1 per cent. in 1988-89 and 0·5 per cent. in 1989-90. It will be mighty difficult within those figures to continue the resource allocation working party's recommendation of concentrating aid within the overall NHS budget.

We believe that it is extremely important to have an innovation fund for the NHS, building up over two to three years to £250 million. It would be specifically earmarked to deal with inequalities within the NHS.

In education, we must encourage 16 to 19-year-olds to stay on for higher technical education. Too many leave because of financial pressures on their family budgets. These are facts. Conservative Members may not wish to face them, but if we are to grapple with the inequalities we must develop a targeted strategy in which overall public expenditure is geared, as far as possible, to areas where the need is greatest.

The same principle applies to unemployment, where there are considerable divisions. A total of 94 per cent. of the reduction of 1·6 million employees since 1974 has been in the northern half of the United Kingdom—the north, the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside, the west midlands, the east midlands, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We must try to deal with such problems.

The development agency policies that have been pursued by successive Governments have been rather successful. The agencies have a good record in Scotland and Wales and many of us find it difficult to understand why the Government will not extend that concept to the hardest hit regions. The Government should be selective and obviously choose the north-east and the north-west, but there is also a strong case for concentrating on the problems in Cornwall and parts of Devon.

What else could be done in giving selective help to those regions? Again, the alliance budget proposals came up with a policy proposal—welcomed by *The Economist* on 4 April—to create regional pay differentials and to give employers an incentive to curb the growth of unit costs and so boost employment. The alliance budget proposed a 25 per cent. cut in employers' national insurance contributions, which would apply only to assisted areas and unemployment black spots in the north and south. This cut in the tax on jobs will help companies to meet the cost of employing skilled employees and thus boost job mobility. There are those who would say that this would cause problems with the European Community, as the regional unemployment premium did, but, as part of the strategy, I envisage removing the national insurance contribution completely. If there is a phasing-in period, it will be within the rules.

There are new policy initiatives in all these areas, which the Government can and should take. First, they should integrate the tax and benefit system and concentrate aid selectively on the area which is probably the most troubling of all—poverty among those on supplementary benefit, those on basic pensions, and on those people in the community——

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Dr. Owen: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. — who need some extra help and who have not participated in the overall rise in average earnings which has taken place over this period. All they have done has been held to take account of the rise in the cost of living. That means that a substantial number of people, who were either widowed in the war or who made considerable sacrifices in the war years, are not benefiting from the overall improvement in prosperity in Britain. In our judgment, that is wrong. It can and should be put right, not by a global increase in pensions to everyone—rich and poor—but by concentrating on those who need it and would benefit most.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: We believe that in the National Health Service and the education budget there is a need to concentrate and target resources. That we shall do.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: If the hon. Lady will forgive me, I should like to finish.

Mr. Winnick: The Fuhrer does not give way.

Dr. Owen: As to unemployment, there is a strong case for selectively gearing resources, by geography through special development agencies and reducing the national insurance contribution in regional areas. This has all been costed in the alliance budget proposals and it is all eminently fundable. It would not require a lot of extra civil servants to make these changes. They have been done before in other policy areas and they need to be done again. The Government are being complacent in thinking that the divisions in our society—the dissensions and considerable feelings of depression and demoralisation that exists in many parts of our inner cities, particularly, although not exclusively, in the north—can be left alone. There must be more detailed and specific policies in this sector. The total inability of Conservative Members even to contemplate new ideas is depressing and that inability is sadly also found on the Labour Benches.

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Dr. Owen: We are not arguing with the intentions of the Labour party. The hon. Member for Oldham, West, with whom I had some difficulty in his intervention, has a long-standing and genuine commitment to reducing inequality. I know that from my work with him in the Department of Health and Social Security. But, with respect to him, he still believes that we can afford to do this by universally applying benefits or by generalised increases in public expenditure. That cannot be done. Our experience with that expenditure is that it has not reduced inequalities. The intention can be there and the heart can be in the right place, but the hard-headed practical decisions have not matched the needs, and inequalities have increased. We believe that it is the task of any Government in this country to redress those inequalities and to ensure that the improved prosperity, which many of us hope will be sustained over the next few years, can be more fairly and evenly spread across the nation and heal some of the considerable divisions which exist in the United Kingdom.

5.25 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has made a characteristic speech—characteristic in his contempt for the conventions of the House in refusing to give way on a number of occasions, characteristic in the largesse of his promises, which apparently are unclearly funded without any clear understanding of where the money would come from, and characteristic in the mutual incompatibility of some of the things that he was saying. For example, he made an allegation, which was also made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), that the Government have increased taxes, yet we shall have to wait and see what will be added to the tax bill by these promises. We must listen very carefully to what the right hon. Member for Devonport said, this being the alliance social service policy mark 3 or 4—I forget where we have got to. Mr. Dick Taverne could no doubt tell us.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): Does my hon. Friend recall that the last time a Government were elected on promises of increasing benefits across the scale and increasing public expenditure in every direction, the result was bankruptcy for the country, the decimation of pensioners' savings and the cutting of the health programme, particularly hospital building, by the biggest margin ever? Does my hon. Friend consider that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport should take that factor into account?

Mr. Whitney: I hope that that record, like Calais on Queen Mary's heart, is engraved on the heart of the right hon. Member for Devonport.

The right hon. Member for Devonport, like the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, based much of his speech on the findings of the report of Sir Douglas Black and his colleagues, "Inequalities In Health", and the more recent report, "The Health Divide", which was published by the Health Education Council as its last act before it became the Health Education Authority.

We should concentrate on the contents of those document. Those documents have been seized upon gleefully, not only by Opposition parties, as one would expect, but by the more unthinking parts of the press—which, sadly, is much of the press—and by assorted bishops and others who were anxious to cry wolf and havoc and suggest that this country is going downhill, that matters are getting worse and that the divides between north and south and between the classes are worsening.

We must look at these studies more carefully than did the right hon. Members for Devonport and for Sparkbrook. We must look at what the studies have found, at those who wrote them and their motivations. It is clear that a common thread runs through them. One of those common threads is Professor Peter Townsend, who is a well-known visiting professor of sociology at Essex university and also a professor of Socialism. In social science, if a particular target is pursued, it is notoriously easy to find the data to reach it. The Black working group was forced to confess in paragraph 10 of its conclusions that it was

"conscious of the difficulties in collecting and reporting occupational characteristics".

In paragraph 8, it said:

"We do not believe there to be any single and simple explanation of the complex data we have assembled."

Those qualifications did not stop the authors happily leaping to broad, collectivist and Socialist conclusions, which are precisely the sorts of conclusions that they wanted to reach.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's argument, which he has prefaced by saying that the conclusions reached in that report are a result of the bigotry or political attitudes of its compiler. Aside from all these statistics, will he accept that there is genuine poverty and a genuine divide in this country? Will the hon. Gentleman come to south Wales, to a constituency such as mine, and see there people who are genuinely socially deprived?

Mr. Whitney: I am coming to precisely that point. I am glad to rejoice, as I hope is the hon. Gentleman, that in the employment statistics Wales is now leading the country in finding new jobs. I hope that the hon. Gentleman takes as much comfort from that as do Conservative Members.

These issues can be approached from a class bias, a fascination with a class division of society, which is basically a Marxist approach. I am not suggesting that the right hon. Member for Devonport suffers any longer from that infantile disorder, but perhaps the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has not entirely shed those spots. Marxism

is entirely based on this class approach and is carefully reflected in the Black report, in "The Health Divide" and, sadly, in the fixation on equality which we heard in the speeches of the right hon. Members for Sparkbrook and for Devonport.

The preface to "The Health Divide" by Dr. David Player fell into the same trap. I am particularly sad about that because during my brief time as a Health Minister I worked with Dr. David Player, for whom I have a high regard. He is deeply committed to solving health problems, but, sadly, he has been led to the inequality pitfall. He suggested that there must be a public debate on health inequality and said:

"Such inequity is inexcusable in a democratic society".

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General has pointed out, we live in a world of inequalities. We may all be equal before God, and I hope that it is true to say that in this country we are equal before the law. In every other individual respect, however, we are unequal. These inequalities are found everywhere in the world.

That is borne out by the evidence inherent in the Black report and "The Health Divide", as people would see if they looked carefully at them. In paragraphs 5.65 and 5.66 the authors of the Black report, perhaps against their natural instincts, say:

"The second question, then, is whether the inequalities in health between social classes and regions, found in Britain, also exist elsewhere.

Briefly, the evidence of section II—although disparate and not permitting comprehensive comparison—suggests that they do."

The same point is made in "The Health Divide". In paragraph 5.5 in its conclusions the report states:

"Certainly the U.K. is not alone in experiencing inequalities in health. Every country to a greater or lesser extent experiences differences in health between regional, social or income groups."

It is clear that all societies have this problem and that it is by no means unique to this country, and certainly not under this Conservative Government.

There is no doubt that the equality of health care in a country is relevant to this problem. Paragraph 1.2 of "The Health Divide" refers to the comments on social justice expressed at a World Health Organisation meeting and states:

"In health care the principle of social justice 'leads to equal access to available care, equal treatment for equal cases and equal quality of care.'"

Although certain problems in our Health Service remain to be solved—that could not be gainsaid—incontrovertibly there is greater equality of health care in this country than in any other. Fortunately, the additional resources which the Government, under my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, have devoted to our Health Service have produced a level of care of which we continue to be proud.

Inequality exists all over the world. The real concern should be with absolute levels. I am not interested in the gap between the best and the worst. Let us say that 20 per cent. of our population found some elixir that enabled them to live fit, healthy and disease-free to 100 and then they suddenly died peacefully and quickly in their sleep. Such a phenomenon would increase the gap which in statistical terms is bothering the right hon. Members for Sparkbrook and for Devonport. It does not bother me. I should be delighted about that but should be concerned with those at the lower end of the scale.

"The Health Divide", giving another example of inequalities, says in paragraph 6.4.1 on smoking habits that 17 per cent. of professional men were smokers whereas 49 per cent. of men in the unskilled manual category were smokers. That is a gap about which we might well be concerned. We might wish that the 17 per cent. of professional men was reduced to 15 per cent. or 10 per cent., but that is not the issue. It is that 49 per cent. of manual workers smoked. That is a legitimate scientific policy concern, but it is nothing to do with the sort of class warfare that the Opposition seek to wage.

The right hon. Member for Devonport referred to differences in education. "The Health Divide" confirmed earlier findings in Britain that death rates decline with increased years of education. How do the Opposition egalitarians answer that? Do they wish to deny education to those who benefit? Of course not. They want to increase education.

There are problems for Britain on an international scale. National statistics on coronary heart disease are much more worrying than they should be. The rate of improvement is not nearly as good as it should be—on that we can agree.

So in absolute terms—and I return to the point that worries me — there are issues that concern us. Not surprisingly, *The Guardian* picked one up. On 26 March 1987, commenting on the Health Education Council's document, it said that a decline in overall death rates from heart disease was accompanied by

"a one per cent. increase for less privileged classes."

That is worrying. We can perhaps be complacent about those at the top end of the income scale. So long as the rate improves for those at the lower end, that is all right, but if it deteriorates we must worry.

"The Health Divide" gives the explanation on page 2 in paragraph 3:

"death rates among women from coronary heart disease and lung cancer . . . rose in manual groups over the 10 year period".

My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Health and Social Security must address their minds to that. Those rates do not mean that those diseases are a function of poverty. Other reasons and issues are deliberately neglected by those who write these reports and those who pounce on them and seek to benefit politically from them.

The Opposition will answer these points as they always do, saying, "It is all a matter of money, income levels and poverty." That does not bear one moment's examination. Statistics have been bandied about by both sides of the House. The right hon. Member for Devonport talked about the change in incomes for the bottom 20 per cent. of the population, but, between 1979 and 1985, expenditure by those households, excluding the cost of housing increased in real terms by 12 per cent. No one would say that this is high, but by no stretch of the imagination does a 12 per cent. increase in expenditure mean an increase in poverty, as the right hon. Members for Sparkbrook and for Devonport would have us believe.

In real terms the income of the average man with two children who is on supplementary benefit and housing benefit, is higher than the income of the average man in manual work in 1948. No-one will say that that is a high level, but as someone with personal family knowledge of the income of a manual labourer in 1948, I can say that

[Mr. Whitney]

that was not a subsistence level. Therefore, we have to look for other answers. These political, class answers are bogus. As soon as they are examined, they are seen to be false.

In the raw material of these two reports that have excited the attention of the two right hon. Gentlemen, we can find pointers to where the answers lie. For example, paragraph 6.4.2. of "The Health Divide" says:

"At a regional level the highest proportion of heavy drinkers was found in the North . . . and the lowest in East Anglia and the Outer South East of England".

That finding is confirmed by the family expenditure survey which shows that the weekly expenditure on alcohol in the north is £8.08 and in the south-east it is £7.94. There is not a great difference there, but there is more spending in the famously under-privileged north than there is in the south.

Alcohol is one factor in the health differences and exercise is another. Not much information is available about exercise but such as there is blows out of the water the thesis of the Opposition. Paragraph 6.4.4 of "The Health Divide" is headed: "Exercise in Leisure-time". It says that while there has been an increase in participation for all groups—I am glad to note that—nevertheless "the social gradient remained." It says that in walking and swimming:

"the professional group had the highest participation rates and the unskilled manual the lowest."

The same is true of tobacco. I have said that 17 per cent. of men in the professional classes smoke, while the figure for manual workers is 49 per cent. That, too, could be called a class division.

If the Opposition looked seriously at the published data they could find a reasonable division. The family expenditure survey of 1985 shows that expenditure on tobacco by households in the north is £4·98 a week, while in the south-east it is £4 a week. That is a difference of nearly 20 per cent. I make no moral judgment on this. I am merely saying that these are the issues that sensible, responsible politicians should look at. The Health Education Council should be active on those issues. The council should be ashamed of such issues and these are the issues upon which we must work.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment said, the answer is not to impose on society the Socialism that everyone else has rejected, and seemingly only the few authors of these reports and a few left-behind diehards on the Opposition Benches still believe in. Socialism is now being rejected in China, in the Soviet Union and in Socialist Spain, and has been rejected in France. Only the little rump of Socialism in this House believes that the answer to Britain's problems lies in something called Socialism. The answer lies in making Britain more and more prosperous, and the way of prosperity is the way of greater health.

5.44 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): If Socialism has been abolished in China, in the Soviet Union and in other countries the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) must be in favour of keeping the bomb in order to deter the Labour party, because there seems to be no other justification for keeping it. My constituents will be pleased to hear that the reason why they suffer, as the statistical evidence shows, greater ill health than people living in the south is that they do not swim enough. The Tory council closed the swimming baths and my constituents cannot swim in the Mersey because it is an open sewer full of sewage, and the Government refused funds to clean it up. That is a political point as well.

There is an elixir of life for many people. It is called money. The idea that a rich person cannot buy a better health service, a better environment, a better house that is not damp and alleviates suffering from overcrowding, and cannot avoid the other things that are injurious to health, is nonsense. The hon. Gentleman wants us to believe that the rich do not enjoy better health because of their money. In saying that he is rejecting not just the evidence from the Labour party, but the evidence of Government Departments and academics and all the research that has been done. The only difference between Karl Marx and Government Departments is that Government Departments recognise more degrees of class than Karl Marx recognised.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the real problem, especially in the north, is the difference between the suburban areas and the areas in the depths of the inner cities? Does he agree that that is not reflected in this generic, general message of a north-south divide, but is a much more subtle problem?

Mr. Roberts: The poor are poor in the south and the rich are rich in the north. I accept that. However, there are more rich people in the south and more poor people in the north. I accept that one cannot totally generalise, but that is the situation. There are higher levels of unemployment in the north, higher deprivation and, while many problems in the north also exist in the south, they do not exist to the same extent or in the same concentrations.

This debate is about the growing social and economic inequalities in Britain, and nowhere are those inequalities more manifest than in Merseyside and in my constituency, part of which is almost identical to inner-city Liverpool. I warn Conservative Members that they cannot write off areas like Merseyside without consequences for the whole nation. In the end, the poverty, the high levels of unemployment, the deprivation and the crime, which is often a consequence of deprivation and of the high levels of unemployment, and the breakdown of law and order in inner cities on Merseyside and elsewhere will eventually affect the whole of our society.

The whole nation, including the people in the prosperous south, will face the consequences of ghettoisation—I use that word advisedly—of areas like Merseyside. Ministers have said that there are not many votes for the Tories in those areas anyway. Therefore, they have decided to write them off, but not without a fanfare of policies that cost little in the run-up to a general election in order to pretend that they are worried about the inner cities.

I want to deal with unemployment, job losses, low pay, crime and drugs, housing — especially in relation to house prices—and with whether the nation can afford to do anything about those problems, given the divide that exists between the north and the south. I shall deal briefly with each of those issues. The first issue is unemployment. I said:

"My constituency has many problems. Their resolution will not be helped by the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer".

I said that, not in this year's Budget debate, but in my maiden speech on 12 June 1979 after the general election. I said then, and it seems that very little has changed:

"Nationally, there are about 1¼ million people unemployed. The facts in Bootle and Merseyside are far more serious than the national figure indicates . . . There is a weak manufacturing sector in Bootle and on Merseyside. Unemployment among active males in the constituency is . . . 12 per cent.".—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1979; Vol. 968, c. 280.]

I thought that the problems were bad in 1979, and I said that the Chancellor's speech would not help to deal with those problems and that nothing had changed, but things have changed dramatically. That figure of 12 per cent. unemployment in 1979 has increased to over 20 per cent. in 1987. In the Merseyside travel-to-work area, which includes Knowsley, Liverpool, St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral—parts of the last two areas are prosperous—registered male unemployment is 26 per cent. Registered female unemployment is 12·5 per cent. Many women do not bother to register because they receive no benefit if their husbands are in work. In Bootle the average unemployment level is 24 per cent., and male unemployment is a massive 30 per cent.

Moreover, women are often the breadwinners—perhaps in the majority of households—with clerical jobs at Giro, which was created by a Labour Government, in the Civil Service and in mail order enterprises such as Vernon and Littlewood. If the women did not go out to earn pin money, as the Conservatives describe it, many families in my constituency could not manage to live on or just above the poverty line. In February 1987 the official Department of Employment list showed 10,579 unemployed in Bootle—an increase of 1 per cent. at a time when the Tories were claiming that the unemployment figures had begun to fall. The adjusted, indexed figure showed 12,066 or 24·6 per cent., unemployed in Bootle, representing an annual cost to the nation of £69 million or £724 per working person in unemployment and social security payments.

The Government talk about the restart programme as their major initiative, but only 1 per cent. of those interviewed have been found jobs. When I pointed that out in an intervention, the Minister said that they were just the ones who were actually placed after interview, but that there must be others who had found jobs of their own accord as a result of the training schemes. Let the Minister come and tell that to the people of Bootle, who have only to look around to see how many young people are unemployed. The statistics also give the lie to the Minister's claims. Youth unemployment has never been so high, nor has the resulting sense of futility and hopelessness among young people and their parents.

One of the causes has been the massive number of job losses under the last two Tory Governments. Between June 1978 and 1984 nearly 30 per cent. of employees in Knowsley and 22 per cent. in St. Helens are estimated to have lost their jobs. Even in Sefton, the district least affected by the recession, more than 10 per cent. of employees lost their jobs in that period. In numerical terms the loss was greatest in the city of Liverpool, where 46,700, or 15·8 per cent., of employees lost their jobs. The Conservatives try to make out that that is all to do with Derek Hatton, but it is to do with the way in which factories have closed and industry has deserted Merseyside, even Conservative-controlled areas such as Sefton.

Many of those jobs will never be recovered unless the Government intervene in the workings of the economy. Large factories have closed down permanently and the manufacturing base that remained has been gradually but finally destroyed by the Government. We have lost 4,600 jobs at British Leyland, 2,000 at United Biscuits, and 1,500 at Courtaulds—a profitable, strike-free factory which could not compete with cheap American imports of synthetic fibres and carpets because of high energy costs and interest rates. A further 900 jobs have been lost at Lucas Girling and 800 at Rockware Glass. The list goes on and on. I could refer also to GEC, Littlewood and Cammell Laird. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board has had to get rid of registered dock workers because of the decline in manufacturing industry over which the Government have presided.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The hon. Gentleman blames the Conservative Government for the decline in manufacturing employment, but whom does he blame for the decline of 750,000 manufacturing jobs—three quarters of them in the north—during the period of the Labour Government?

Mr. Roberts: The Labour Government.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the hon. Gentleman very much.

Mr. Roberts: If the Labour Government failed to prevent a decline in manufacturing, the Labour Government were to blame, but I wish that in the past seven years we had had the rates of decline that we had under the Labour Government rather than those that the Conservatives have brought about. I wish, too, that we had had the same level of public expenditure on housing and employment in the construction industry. I wish, too, that we had the levels of unemployment and of unemployment benefit and social security that we had under the Labour Government.

No one is suggesting that the Labour Government were perfect, but compared with the present Government the Labour Ministers were angels, white as snow, in terms of their record on jobs and industry for Britain. It was not the Labour Government who abolished exchange controls. Since the Conservatives came to power, more than £96 billion has gone abroad, about £60 billion in portfolio investment and about £35 billion in direct investment. That would not have happened if exchange controls had remained.

The growing social and economic inequalities on Merseyside are not illustrated only by unemployment. There is also a great deal of poverty among people who are in work. This is where the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) got it wrong when he called for selective rather than universal measures to deal with the problems. One cannot deal selectively with the problem of low pay, which affects 8 million people. On Merseyside, about 250,000 people are earning poverty wages and form a substantial proportion of the large number of Merseysiders living in poverty or on the margins of poverty. The Low Pay Unit figures suggest that some 346,000 people, or almost 23 per cent. of the population of Merseyside, are living on the official poverty line.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was vilified by the right hon. Member for Devonport for leaving the Chamber during the course of the second speech following his own, but I note that the right hon. Member for Devonport has done

[Mr. Roberts]

exactly the same thing. He complained that such behavious was discourteous, but as soon as I started to refer to him he walked out. However, I do not particularly like drawing attention to such double standards, so I shall return to the figures.

The 346,000 people on Merseyside estimated by the Low Pay Unit to be living on the poverty line include only those dependent on supplementary benefit. That figure takes no account of those ineligible for supplementary benefit, perhaps because they are in full-time work, although their total earnings may be equal to or often below the level of supplementary benefit. There is massive poverty in Bootle and on Merseyside among those in work as well as those out of work. Low pay is a major problem. The next Labour Government will deal with that problem. One of the instruments that will be used will be a statutory minimum wage. The extent of poverty and unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is no figment of a Socialist imagination. It is a statistical reality and shows how many people are seriously suffering and crying out for help.

A major consequence of that situation in the past seven or eight years on Merseyside has been a massive increase in crime — in violence, burglary, fraud, theft and criminal damage. It is no accident that, since 1978, violence against the person has increased by 30 per cent. on Merseyside; that burglary has increased by 66 per cent.; that theft and the handling of stolen goods have increased by 20 per cent.; that fraud and forgery have risen by 98 per cent.; and criminal damage by 70 per cent. Crime on Merseyside has risen by 41 per cent., presided over by the so-called party of law and order. One crime is committed on Merseyside every 3·5 minutes.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is a good constituency Member and Socialist. Can he tell the House why levels of crime — particularly of violence — have increased by a far greater proportion in Labour-controlled areas than elsewhere in the country?

Mr. Roberts: I do not know whether I am allowed to say that the man is mad. Somehow, the hon. Gentleman thinks that the reason why people are poor, badly housed and suffering deprivation is that they have Labour councils. I assure the hon. Gentleman that they have Labour councils because they are badly housed, are poor and are suffering deprivation, so they vote Labour. They recognise that that is the only way to change their circumstances. That is why Labour councillors represent people who are deprived, in difficulties, badly housed and unemployed in our community. The hon. Gentleman's tautology is nonsensical and he knows it.

One crime is committed every 3·5 minutes on Merseyside. I know that Conservative Members — the Prime Minister is very good at it—say that, of course, crime has nothing to do with social conditions, bad housing, unemployment and deprivation. They make it seem a consequence of original sin, and they ignore the statistical correlation between increases in youth unemployment and increases in crime.

Unlike Conservative Members, I know for a fact that severity of punishment is not the greatest deterrent to committing crime. The greatest deterrent is the certainty of detection, and, when one has been caught, the loss of one's self-respect, the respect of one's family and friends, and one's job. If there is no job to lose there is no self-respect, because there is no hope for the future. People become easy prey for the hard drug pushers and have no logical reason not to go on and commit a crime. That is the sort of environment and society that the Conservative Government have created.

Six years ago there was no heroin addiction on Merseyside. The pushers did not have a field day, because drug addiction did not exist there, but it has arrived under this Government, and there is a new generation of unemployed young people who are hooked on it in my constituency—the Thatcher generation.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Ridiculous.

Mr. Roberts: Conservative Members can say "Ridiculous" as much as they like, but that is the heritage of young people in my constituency under this so-called Government of law and order.

If that is not true, let the Goverment explain the 41 per cent. increase in crime that has taken place during the past seven years under the so-called Government of law and order. No doubt they will use law and order to whip up feelings again during the election campaign to get grubby, filthy votes, while they preside over the social consequences and unemployment that create the very crimes they claim to oppose.

I am against crime. I want some hope for the young people of my constituency. I want hope through public expenditure, some Government intervention in the workings of the country's economy, some investment in Merseyside and the return of some jobs. I want a Government who care and will spend money, not on tax cuts for the rich, but on building decent council housing. That would deal with the homeless in my area and put unemployed building workers back to work.

If ever we needed a classic example of the divide betweeñ the two nations—the rich in the south, in parts of London and elsewhere, and the poor in the north and in Merseyside — we have only to look at what is happening to house prices. Earlier, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that house prices had been inflated, that they had quadrupled, or even gone up sixfold, in London. The flat that I bought in London doubled in price in three years, and I benefited from that. It was in the east end of London, an area in which house prices are rocketing because of the activities of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Mr. Lilley: That shows the success of our inner-city policies.

Mr. Roberts: The people who are in the deprived area of Tower Hamlets canot afford to buy houses there. No council houses are being built for them. That is the extent of the success of the policies of the hon. Gentleman's party.

I have just come back from America, where I saw letting advertisements in the *Herald Tribune*. Those advertisements, which are aimed at the Americans, say that now is the time to buy in docklands. Rich Americans are investing in the Canary wharf development, but ordinary people cannot afford to buy houses there, and no houses are being built for rent. A Member of Parliament comes from Bootle and buys a flat because he needs one to do his job in the House and finds that it quadruples in

price during a five-year period. That is the position in London and the south, but it is not the position on Merseyside.

House prices are falling on Merseyside. The Park lane estate of 140 dwellings was built in my constituency by Wimpey. The houses were for sale, some on the basis of equity sharing. The estate was built on land that was donated by the local authority, or sold cheaply. Thirty houses now stand empty, not because the people who owned them were made redundant and defaulted on their mortgages—although that was true of some of them, because of unemployment—but because they decided to jack it in and take the keys to the estate agents or building society because house prices were falling. Such people were not gaining any equity. The mortgage repayments were not worth repaying any more, because prices were falling and they could get somewhere cheaper by renting. Those houses were originally sold for £21,000 to £22,000. They are now selling for £18,000. Efforts are being made to sell the abandoned ones for £10,000 because they have been vandalised. The whole estate is in decline.

The area that I am describing could not even be called an inner-city area. It is the kind of area which the Conservatives describe as one of hope. It was a partnership, build-for-sale scheme, which is declining because of unemployment and poverty in Merseyside. What a picture that presents, compared with that of the prosperous south, whose economy, they tell us, is overheated. If that is so, we have a nuclear winter in Merseyside.

Mr. Whitney: Is the hon. Gentleman trying to tell us that he objects to the fact that people in the north, on Merseyside and in Bootle, have to devote a smaller proportion of their income to housing costs than do people in the south? That leaves them with a greater percentage of disposable income for other necessities and the pleasures of life. Docklands was laid waste largely because of the impact of trade unions, which were supported by his party. That area has now been brilliantly revitalised as an exciting, international area for investment from all over the world, which is creating jobs and prosperity. Does the hon. Gentleman object to that, too?

Mr. Roberts: Only 8 per cent. of the jobs in docklands have gone to local people. That figure is, perhaps, an exaggeration. The people who work there do not live there. Most of them are rich people who have come from outside. With regard to housing policies, there is a market in fake rent books, which are being sold by caretakers in the area. In this way the rich can buy a rent book and pretend that they are tenants of the local authority to get a house for £44,000, which they can sell two months later for £100,000. The rich are corrupt, too. There have been examples of that in the Chamber. It is not only the poor who fiddle their social security. The rich become involved as well. If that is the kind of housing and job policy that the hon. Member for Wycombe advocates, I am happy to oppose it.

I am also aware that we must provide houses everywhere for sale and for rent at a price that ordinary people can afford. That is not happening on Merseyside, because of poverty and unemployment, and it is not happening in the south, because people on average incomes cannot afford to buy houses, whose prices are escalating dramatically and are being bought by people who do not even reside in Britain. Capitalism is losing its patriotism.

Mr. Lilley: As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman objects to rising house prices in the east end and to falling house prices on Merseyside. He also believes that crime is caused by poverty and by riches. Does he believe in Socialism, or in nihilism?

Mr. Roberts: I do not object to the fact that house prices on Merseyside have fallen. I object to the cause of that fall in house prices—unemployment and poverty. If Merseyside was prospering, if there was high employment and no poverty and if house prices were steady or falling slightly, I would rejoice, but that is not the position. I object to the fact that houses are left empty because of poverty and unemployment. The Conservative party is supposed to be the party of owner-occupation, but people cannot buy houses in London and the south because prices are escalating so quickly. That shows our two-nation society. That shows the contrast that has been created by the Government.

We will have a Labour Government, who will do something about unemployment——

Mr. Marlow: Not this time.

Mr. Roberts: We will get a Labour Government, whether on 7 May or not. The more you speak, the more likely we are to get one.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not think you said anything, did you?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) realises that he made a slip of the tongue.

Mr. Roberts: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Sometimes it is difficult to resist the provocation.

There will be a Labour Government, who will deal with the problems of unemployment by reflating the economy in a way that does not suck in imported goods. We shall enable areas such as Merseyside to benefit from private and public expenditure—the latter on hospitals, schools, social services, increasing the number of people in the caring professions and building council houses to solve the housing crisis in Bootle and Merseyside and to put construction workers back to work.

Of course, if we have a Labour Government, with a decisive overall majority, we must answer the question, "Can we afford it?" British people say, "We agree with the Labour party's policies, but can we afford them?" Let no Conservative Member tell us that we cannot afford our policies of providing jobs, homes, a decent environment and decent health services for our people, when £96 billion has gone abroad to be invested in jobs overseas since the Tories came to power. That is our money. We should not forget the £25 billion that has been invested overseas in portfolio investments.

During their period of office the Tories have received £53 billion in North sea oil revenue, which has certainly not gone towards re-equipping and modernising British industry or investing in the British economy. Last year the Government received £11·5 billion from the North sea, yet they have cut public spending and denied the consequences. They pretend to have both policies at the same time — increasing expenditure on the Health Service and cutting public expenditure. They have cut

[Mr. Roberts]

housing, education and science research. Public spending on housing has been cut by about 60 per cent. The social security budget has increased by 33·7 per cent. as unemployment has increased. The Government plan to raise £4·7 billion from selling public assets during the next 12 months, if there is no general election. Unemployment costs the Government £20 billion a year in higher benefits and lost taxes, yet they say that we cannot put the unemployed back to work because we cannot afford it. The increase in unemployment since 1979 has cost the Government £12·5 billion each year.

We cannot afford not to put people back to work. We cannot afford not to have people creating goods and services and paying tax. We cannot afford to have so many people consuming without creating or producing. That is the Labour party's policy, which is sensible, logical and sound. The Government say that, to provide all those services, a Labour Government would have to borrow more. The average owner-occupied household knows the benefit of borrowing to provide capital assets. One borrows to buy or build a house, and as long as the money owed on the capital asset is less than the value of the asset, one is quids in.

The Government are not borrowing to build capital assets in manufacturing industry, housing or hospitals. They are borrowing to pay the weekly food bills—the unemployment and social security bills. They have had a large public sector borrowing requirement since they came to power. Labour would borrow to implement its job creation and social policies, to create capital assets, to put Britain back to work and to get rid of the scourge of unemployment, crime and deprivation that exists in areas such as Merseyside.

6.15 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition is an insult because it is out of touch, because of the Labour party's record when it was in office and because it offers no realistic solutions to Britain's genuine problems. The motion is out of touch because, by any reckoning, the vast majority of people in Great Britain today are far better off than they were in 1979.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) quoted some figures, trying to show that the wealthiest 5 per cent. of the population had increased their share of the nation's wealth at the expense of the poorest 5 per cent. He failed to say that the figures also show that, including the effects of tax and benefits, there has been almost no change in the share of wealth of the top earners as against the share of the low earners. The right hon. Gentleman also quoted a recent health report, which said that inequalities in health had increased under the Government. He did not say that similar reports were issued under the Labour Government, saying that inequalities in health were increasing under the Labour Government.

We could quote statistics until we were blue in the face, but the simple fact is that more people are better off under this Government than ever before. Even poorer people are substantially better off, as has been proved by the fact that last year there were far more live births than in the last year of the Labour Government.

Many Labour Members are sincere in their opposition to the Government and in their anxiety about what they see as the inequalities and problems of our society. But if they are genuinely sincere, they should also examine the record of the Labour party. In the 1960s, the Labour Government made 10,000 miners redundant in Amber Valley. Their redundancy pay and pension provision was a pittance. When miners are made redundant in Amber Valley today, they receive substantially better redundancy, pension and benefits provisions than was the case under the Labour Government. Is that divisive? What is divisive is the action of the Labour regime on Derbyshire county council——

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The hon. Gentleman has put forward his general thesis and one respects it, and he has mentioned his consituency. But in fairness, and considering the matter objectively, does he agree that there is a problem in Hartlepool, where 13,900 people in that small constituency are in receipt of supplementary benefit, and consistently since 1983 10,000 people have been out of work? That alone costs £59 million. Does he agree that there must be a divide between the position in Hartlepool and the affluence in other parts of the country?

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I do not deny that we have problems in our society. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that the number of social security claimants is higher in his constituency now than it was in 1979. Part of the reason for that is that the levels at which social security benefits are attained now are more generous than they were in 1979, so, on the hon. Gentleman's own figures, it is arguable that people are better off as a result of the change.

I also do not deny that unemployment is a severe problem in our society, but to claim that it is a problem unique to Great Britain or that it has been caused by the Government is false. There are many reasons for unemployment. One is that we have had substantial overmanning in industry for many years. Another reason, which is often conveniently forgotten by Opposition Members, is that over the past five years there has been a net increase of well over 1 million people in the size of the work force. That is a substantial cause for unemployment. I wish that Opposition Members would not always try to blame every problem in society on the Government and remember that many of our problems, which are common to many developed countries, were inherited from the previous Labour Government.

I should like to continue my thesis. What I consider to be genuinely divisive is the Left-wing regime that now rules in Derbyshire county council. Since 1981, when the current regime took over, Derbyshire has gone from being one of the lowest-rated counties in England and Wales to one of the highest-rated. It means that a pensioner in Amber Valley now pays about £3 a week more in rates than a pensioner living in a similar house in neighbouring Staffordshire, which is Labour-controlled, but is controlled by a relatively moderate Labour council, or neighbouring Leicestershire, which is Conservative-controlled. That extra £3 precept on the pensioner in Derbyshire, which is the equivalent of a £3 a week cut in pension, is due solely to the profligacy and overspending of Derbyshire county council. That is what I call divisive.

The Opposition motion is also insulting because they offer no solution to the problems in our society. Making

the rich poorer does not make the poor richer. Opposition Members should remember that. The only way for everyone in our society to become better off is to ensure that our economy is successful. It is an unfortunate but proven fact that Labour policies are inimical to making our economy successful. One does not create wealth by making an enemy of enterprise, by blasting business men, or by pillorying profit, which is one of the favourite games of Opposition Members.

One does not make a successful economy by savaging top industrial managers' high earnings. What is wrong with paying a high salary to a manager in a successful industry, whose success and hard work have ensured not only that British goods are sold at home and abroad, but the employment of people in that company? What is wrong with him keeping a reasonable proportion of his salary? One does not make a successful economy by taxing people, be they managers or scientists, at a top rate of 90 per cent., which happened under the previous Labour Government.

I venture to suggest that that may have been one of the reasons why, under that Labour Government, there was a loss of 750,000 jobs in manufacturing. Perhaps that is also why 75 per cent. of those jobs were lost in the north. That was also divisive. Perhaps that is also the reason why manufacturing output in 1979 was lower than in 1974, which is something for which Opposition Members like to blame the Government. It might also be why, under that Labour Government, the ratio of imported goods to domestic goods tripled.

Opposition Members have to learn that saying that one cares is not the same as creating the wealth to pay for that caring. Self-righteousness comes cheap. That is why the Labour party went into the 1974 general election promising the earth. That is why, in the subsequent two years, the Labour Government did their utmost to deliver the earth. That is why their overspending forced them, by 1977, to impose the most severe public spending cuts ever seen in this country, which cut into every area of public spending, including the Health Service, which is so dear to many of their hearts. That is when the most severe round of cuts since the founding of the NHS took place in the hospital building programme. That was divisive. It will not happen again.

6.25 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): From speeches by Conservative Members, particularly the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), one got the impression that all was well, and that there were no divisions and no poverty. Conservative Members said that, simply because there were the same problems in the Third world, not only should they exist in this country but they should be acceptable.

There is no doubt about the poverty and the divide in this country. Any reasonable person will accept that the case is proven, whatever parameters or socio-economic indicators one uses. The case that there is a division in society and that there are great gaps between those who have and those who have not can be easily proven. I accept that it is not necessarily a north-south divide. In fact, it is not. When last year I sat on the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill, I was appalled to see the statistics for areas such as Margate and Ramsgate, which have extremely high unemployment. I was interested to hear the arguments put to the Committee.

The divide is there. It is not geographical—it is not necessarily a north-south divide, but it is certainly between those who have and those who have not. In many inner cities in the south there are problems, but they exist to a greater extent in the peripheral areas of this country and of the European Community. The phenomenon has been exacerbated since we became a member of the EEC. The problem is not peculiar to this country; it also manifests itself in other European countries, such as Italy, Greece and the southern parts of France, which are away from the centre of the EEC. That is why I should like to draw to the attention of Conservative Members the severe problems faced by those who represent constituencies in the west and the north. There are problems with facilities and infrastructure.

The erosion of our economic base has continued at a great pace since we have been in the EEC, but whereas in the other EEC countries Governments are doing something about it, this Government are not. In fact, they are not prepared to interfere with the market forces. They are prepared to let them be rampant.

In many areas of Britain, the position has been aggravated by the rundown of old industries. Not only the old heavy industries but the smokestack industries have declined and added to unemployment. For example, in Wales there has been a severe decline in the coal industry, which has become much worse since the end of the miners' strike. Some 13,000 jobs have been lost in the coal industry since 1979. However, at the same time over, 100,000 jobs have been lost in Wales, so one cannot just say that the decline in industry and the increase in unemployment are due simply to the decline in the coal industry.

We have also lost a tremendous number of other jobs. In manufacturing, for example, we have lost 113,000 jobs. In metal goods engineering, we have lost 52,000 jobs. So it is not just an industry that is in decline; it is a region that is in decline while the Government sit back and do nothing.

The problem is multi-faceted. Unemployment is not the only problem in the poor areas. It is compounded by poor housing, or lack of housing, and it is added to by the inadequate health facilities. It is self-evident that greater demands are placed on the health services because of the multiple deprivations to which I have referred.

Mr. Lilley: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that not only is unemployment falling faster in this country than in any other industrialised country in the world, but, within this country, it is falling fastest in Wales?

Mr. Rogers: It is bound to fall fastest in Wales, because we are starting off with the worst possible conditions. If there is to be any improvement, it will be in areas such as Wales. Perhaps that is a tribute to our resourcefulness, and to the way in which people are prepared to overcome the problems with which they exist. However, it is not because of, but in spite of, the Government that people in Wales are fighting back.

Mr. Whitney: Before we leave the subject of Wales, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he, too, rejoices in the success of Heartbeat Wales, which has been acknowledged all over the world?

Mr. Rogers: I do indeed applaud the success of Heartbeat Wales. Again, that success is despite the lack of health resources in Wales. The hon. Member for

[Mr. Rogers]

Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) earlier tried to analyse, in a rather ridiculous way, the reasons for poor health in this country. For example, he said that there was a lack of education, leading to an earlier death rate. That may well be true. He also talked about the greater incidence of heart disease being correlated with deprivation. That is true; I do not dispute it. But what he is really arguing, or would if he were honest in his argument, is that health is a function of wealth and privilege, because health can be bought in this country. That is why there are divisions between the rich and the poor, and that is why unemployed people are dying.

The hon. Member for Wycombe talked about the higher incidence of heart disease among the working classes. That is because they cannot buy health, as his hon. Friends can in this part of the country. The hon. Gentleman came out with spurious arguments about participation levels. He said that the working class did not walk and swim as much as the middle class, who had a higher participation level. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would come to south Wales and talk to the miner who comes up from the pit, has a shower, goes home and says to the wife, "Excuse me, darling. I am going out for my daily jog." He has only walked six miles from the coal face back to pit bottom. He has only been flogging himself with 3 ft of headroom. No wonder he does not want to run up the mountain.

The man who has been humping bricks all day—building private houses, of course; there are not many council houses being built now—will not say to his wife, "Excuse me, darling. I must go for a swim and get some exercise," when he has been flogging himself for six hours in physical exercise. What a daft parameter to use.

The hon. Gentleman's analysis was worthy of Mickey Mouse. No wonder he was superseded by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). At least we know the hon. Lady's prescription for the health of the country, which is honestly based on prejudice and bigotry, whereas the hon. Gentleman's prescription was based on intellectual poverty and ignorance.

In a recent debate the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) came up with a reason for the economic divide. He said that the people in the regions were pricing themselves out of work, and that one prescription that could be adopted by the Government was regional pay bargaining. He said that we should move away from national pay bargaining. If that is the answer to the regional disparities in this country, why is Wales not on a sweep of increased wealth and prosperity? Our average wage is about £42·32 below that in the south-east. The average wages in such areas as Wales and the north differ from the average wage in the south-east by about £40. However, according to the right hon. and learned Gentleman and other Conservative Members, we are pricing ourselves out of jobs.

The Secretary of State for Wales and the Postmaster General—I mean the Paymaster General, but, of course, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is only a postboy for his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment — have talked about the success of the Government's economic policies, and have said that under the present Government there is balanced economic growth throughout the country. I feel that Labour Members are entitled to ask where that economic growth is. It is certainly not in my constituency, or in the region that contains it. Nor is it in the constituencies of my hon. Friends who represent the north-east, the north-west and Wales.

My area has severe problems. We have the highest number of houses with no inside toilet facilities, and the highest number with no bath or shower. We also have the highest number of pensioners who lack those facilities. The perinatal mortality rate is the highest in Wales, and the unemployment rate is more than 20 per cent., with an extraordinarily high level of youth unemployment. There is a greater likelihood of children suffering from measles and whooping cough, and, not surprisingly, the area contains the highest percentage of permanently sick people in the United Kingdom. I am not proud of that record. It is not just a list, but a catalogue of deprivations.

In a recent debate, I drew attention to the eternal wrangling about statistics. Figures are shouted back and forth, and arguments are based on them. Labour Members especially know that statistics do not adequately demonstrate the misery and poverty in many parts of the country. They do not adequately illustrate the struggles, difficulties and despair of pensioners, or the tragedy and pain of the young mother who loses a baby in the early days of its life because of the lack of facilities. They do not adequately show the disillusionment and despair of the young man who has never had a job and sees no likelihood of getting one.

We see that deprivation in our constituencies; we do not need statistics to prove it to us. If Conservative Members scoff, it shows their ignorance and it shows the uncaring attitude of them and of the Government generally.

6.39 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): This afternoon we have been subjected to a series of tirades that have suggested that the inequalties and problems that we face have arisen during the last eight years. It has been suggested that there is a simple solution to these problems. A constant theme that has run through the speeches of Opposition Members is that public spending is the solution to every conceivable problem.

Mr. Simon Hughes: And how we share it out.

Mr. Galley: Yes; how it is shared out is central to the debate.

History has shown that on every occasion when public spending has been increased in line with the policies advocated by the Opposition parties, it has led to those at the lower end of the social and income scales suffering the most.

There has been a Gadarene rush towards the suggestion that poverty and unemployment are the root causes of ill health and of the inequalities between one region and another, but that is not the whole story. We have to examine the evidence that has been advanced. Social groupings are based primarily on occupation. Some occupations, not surprisingly, are more dangerous and difficult than others. When statistics are based on those occupations, that becomes an almost self-fulfilling definition. It is also true that those who suffer from ill health will probably have difficulty in obtaining higher paid employment. That is also a self-fulfilling definition,

because it leads to more people entering the lower income social groupings. However, there are other much more important factors.

There is far more cigarette smoking among the unskilled manual groups and the unemployed. Their consumption of alcohol is also much higher. The consumption of unhealthy foods is also higher and they do not take part in exercise to the same extent as do those in the higher income groups. All those factors have to be taken into account. Death from lung cancer is much greater among manual workers. Social groups 4 and 5 suffer far more from obesity and related health problems. Preventive health services, such as ante-natal and child health clinics, are used less by social groups 4 and 5. Therefore it is not just poverty and unemployment that cause those problems. It is a question of life-style, education and personal responsibility.

There are also genetic factors that nobody can quantify, despite all the health data that have been published. Women live longer than men. Why that should be so has not yet been satisfactorily explained. Certain families have a history of longevity that is not shared by other families. Certain racial groups suffer from complaints that are endemic to them but not to other racial groups.

Mr. Leadbitter: The hon. Gentleman has referred to a number of interesting factors, one of which is the genetic factor. Will he try to explain to the House what genetic factors cause unemployment? Will he try to define the merit of the avoidable cost of unemployment and the merit of the acceptable cost of unemployment? What does he think will be needed in terms of a shift of resources and political will to achieve that end?

Mr. Galley: I regret that the hon. Gentleman has not been listening carefully to my speech. I said that genetic factors and the other matters that I mentioned are all part of the story. I do not deny that unemployment and poverty are part of the picture. I shall deal with that point in due course.

The provision of health services — clinics, nursing provision and the network of social and health services — is concentrated upon the socially and economically deprived areas. That is certainly true in my constituency. The figures suggest that the manual and unskilled groups consult their general practitioners more than the higher income groups. The manual and unskilled groups also use hospital services more than the higher income groups.

Whatever the economic background of the area, general practitioner list sizes have been reduced throughout the country. There are more general practitioners to cope with patients. Furthermore, more people are being treated as in-patients, out-patients and day cases. That applies throughout the country; the picture does not vary either socially or regionally. The further north one goes, the higher are the mortality and morbidity rates. It is the Government's policy to transfer resources from London and the south-east to the midlands and the northern regions. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] It is happening now. In my health authority area, we are nearer to our Health Service resource allocation targets now than we were eight years ago. Although we are part of the so-called deprived north, our resources have been increased. Our policy of transferring resources to the north is constantly being knocked by both Opposition parties. That policy was devised by the leader of the Social Democratic party and it was implemented by the last Labour Government, yet the Opposition parties constantly knock that policy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman would be fairer to the House if he remembered that the concept of transferring resources within the National Health Service was implemented at a time of real growth in the funds that were provided for the NHS. They kept pace with need and they exceeded that need. When there is insufficient growth in the NHS to meet increasing need, is it surprising that there is a diminution in the services that are provided and that those who suffer from the cuts in the inner cities, both in London and elsewhere, complain that the system is no longer fair? It was fair when it began, but in the context of today's economic policies it is no longer fair.

Mr. Galley: That is an attempt to divert us from the truth. During the last eight years, NHS resources have grown by 25 per cent. The amount spent per head of population, at constant prices, has grown by 25 per cent. Operations are being performed now, such as hip replacements and coronary bypasses, that were hardly thought of 10 years ago. I accept that the resource demands are absolutely enormous, but we have consistently devoted more resources to the NHS to keep pace with the growing demands. I defy the hon. Gentleman to commit his party to providing additional resources and keeping the poorest sections of the population on an even keel in terms of income alone. The last time that there was irresponsible growth in social security, health and other expenditure, this country became bankrupt, our health services were cut dramatically, particularly the hospital building programme, and pensioners with small savings and low incomes were the worst hit.

Mr. Marlow: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is appropriate to point out that during the period of the last Labour Government waiting lists in the northern region increased, whereas under this Government they have been reduced, that in the north-western region waiting lists increased under the Labour Government, whereas since we have been in government they have been reduced, and that the same has happened in the Mersey district, the Yorkshire region, the Trent region, the west midlands region and elsewhere? One could go on. Waiting lists have been reduced under this Conservative Government, whereas under the last Labour Government they increased horrifically.

Mr. Galley: My hon. Friend is quite right. By any measure of the quality of our NHS provision — the number of staff and the conditions under which they are working — there have been consistent improvements during the last eight years.

It is also of critical importance that the health of our community is improving all the time. If we look at the morbidity and mortality rates for the whole population and for each group within the population, we see that they are improving — even for social groups 4 and 5. The Opposition will try to suggest that that is not so, but the mortality and morbidity rates in social groups 4 and 5 are significantly better than they were.

Let me deal in particular with a very important indicator of the health of the nation—the perinatal and the neonatal mortality figures. That indicator has

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improved since 1980. It has improved to 10 perinatal deaths per 1,000 births and that improvement has affected every group. We can look at the figures in more detail. In social groups 1 and 2 there has been an improvement in the number of still births from 5·7 per 1,000 to 4·2. In social groups 4 and 5 there has been an improvement from 8·4 per 1,000 to 7·2. The improvement has gone across every group. In social groups 1 and 2 perinatal deaths have reduced from 10·7 per 1,000 to 7·8. In social groups 4 and 5 perinatal deaths have reduced from 15·5 per 1,000 to 12·3. Neonatal deaths in social groups 1 and 2 have reduced from 6·2 per 1,000 to 4·3 and from 8·9 per 1,000 to 6·5 in social groups 4 and 5. Every social group within our community has benefited from improved health. Some have improved more than others, but there has been consistent improvement throughout society.

We have to accept that in some measure there may be effects from poverty and unemployment in certain parts of the country. We can look at that in the context of our health and regional policies. If we accept that argument as being a part, only a part, of the story we have to ask ourselves whose policies are best at coping with those problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) made a valid point. The areas of deprivation and difficulty in Britain are areas such as Merseyside, Tyneside, Teesside, south Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and parts of the west midlands. What are the characteristics of those areas? They are run and controlled by Labour authorities. I do not wish to be simplistic about that, but I know a little bit about Sheffield. All those areas have had rate increases over a good number of years that have been substantially greater that in other parts of the country. The result has been that industry has fled. It has certainly fled from Sheffield.

Mr. Rogers *rose——*

Mr. Galley: I must get on.

Not only has industry fled but people, particularly when they are mobile, have said, "I am not going to continue to pay these rates. I shall live a few miles outside this city in a more pleasant environment. I will not give my rates to that city, which is taking far too much of my income." Therefore, there has been an inevitable concentration of deprived groups. Some authorities have said that they will do all sorts of things for particular ethnic groups, gays and lesbians. Therefore, people such as that will concentrate in those areas, and the deprivation becomes great. Many people have realised that business is moving out because of high rate increases.

One might say, "It is not fair. In our area we have suffered greatly from unemployment because we worked in the great manufacturing industries. That was the basis of our economy and we have now suffered a major decline." Those industries are coal, shipbuilding, steel and vehicle manufacturing. Do those industries ring a bell? Is it not the case that they are all nationalised? Is it not the case that they have been heavily subsidised over a long period of time in order to ingrain their lack of competitiveness? Those are all important factors which underline the problems of unemployment and deprivation in those parts of the country.

Who will be able to solve the problems of unemployment? Are we to return to nationalisation and subsidisation, which have been a disaster for Sheffield, Merseyside, Tyneside and Teesside?

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley) *rose——*

Mr. Galley: It seems a creditable record, if not one of which we should be proud, that 1 million jobs have been created since 1983. That is an excellent response, given the background of the growth of our labour force, the technological change and all the other international problems with which we have had to cope. It is sterile for the Opposition to say that we must subsidise manufacturing industry in order to achieve economic regeneration in my constituency and other parts of the north.

When I visit manufacturing firms in my constituency, I am told that their orders are better. On the latest survey, they are saying that orders are at their best level for 10 years. They say, "We may be taking on a few more employees but primarily we will be buying a better and more up-to-date computerised machine." The subsidy of manufacturing industry will not create additional employment. We have to create wealth by exports and use that wealth to create a whole range of jobs within our economy.

It is sterile to say that we shall increase public expenditure and raise the numbers of those employed by local authorities. That will increase rates and taxes, which is precisely the reason for the decline of areas such as south Yorkshire, Merseyside and Manchester. It will reduce personal consumption and enterprise and it will make industry less competitive.

The 1·1 million jobs that the Labour party says it will create are a mirage. There will simply be a transfer of jobs from the private sector to the public sector. It will strangle enterprise and at this point enterprise must not be strangled because the enterprise upon which the great economy of west Yorkshire and many other areas was based 100 years ago is beginning to revive and rejuvenate. That is happening in Halifax and other parts of west Yorkshire, and I am sure that it is happening in other parts of the country.

As a Government we have reduced barriers to the expansion of business. We have increased the number of small businesses and the number of self-employed, and business is booming in many areas. The Halifax area has received £2 million in enterprise allowances and £3 million in small business improvement schemes and projects. Our record of creating new businesses and self-employment is second to none. The policies of high public spending, high rates and high borrowing that the Labour party wishes to introduce again in the north will stop all that revival in its tracks.

Mr. Barron *rose——*

Mr. Galley: It is not true that the aid given to the north has reduced significantly. It has been better targeted. So often we hear figures trotted out saying that the amount of aid has been reduced. If one looks at the total available from a variety of sources, certainly in my constituency, it has increased significantly. There is aid for research and development, environmental aid, regional aid and specific schemes. All that has increased during the period of this Government.

The problems of the north stem from a lack of enterprise stifled by high rates and subsidised uncom-

petitive industries. Regeneration by enterprise is now working through local economies. Not only is it the case that that enterprise will be stifled and that the 1·1 million jobs are a mirage, but the policies of the Labour party —I should say the policies of the Opposition parties, because it will apply to the Liberal party—will increase unemployment throughout Britain. They will increase unemployment in Halifax and the north of England. They will make 50,000 people unemployed as a result of their policies on defence. They will make 150,000 people unemployed as a result of their policies on nuclear energy. They will make 100,000 people unemployed as a result of their policies on sanctions against South Africa. The policy of a minimum wage, espoused not by the SDP but by the Labour party, and increasing differentials in line with that, will make another 600,000 people unemployed. The reality is that the policies set out by the Labour party will increase unemployment by 1 million not reduce it.

From the detail of what was said by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) it seems that the alliance will follow on roughly the same lines. There may not be quite so much inflation, taxation, borrowing or unemployment, but we will see very much the same sort of policy.

We have seen here today, from both parties and particularly from the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, a cry for higher taxation, higher spending, higher borrowing and—I noted carefully at the top of his list—higher immigration. They will not solve the inequalities of this nation but will bankrupt it. It is only by the growing prosperity and enterprise that is now gradually being shared by more and more communities that we shall succeed, and succeed we shall.

7 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): When I listen to Conservative Members talking about these issues, I often wonder whether we are living in the same country. Whenever we speak about the problems of the National Health Service, unemployment or industry, we are showered with statistics that are supposed to demonstrate the opposite to what everybody knows to be the truth. I am driven to the simple, if not original, question, "If things are so good, how come things are so bad?" Everyone in the country knows what the situation is, regardless of any statistics that Conservative Members might mouth. They will not convince people of something that they know not to be true.

I come hotfoot from the north of England and having lived there all my life, I know something about the region. Today, I was at the launch of the eighth state of the region report—for the first time, produced by the Northern Region Councils Association. The report covers recent changes in six key sectors — the region's economy, labour supply and unemployment, social change, transport and communications, environment and housing and public sector investment.

The report concludes that the north's economic position has worsened in the past year and that the north-south divide is becoming a matter of serious concern. Job losses from the region's traditional industries are still not being counter-balanced by the attraction of new industry, and the north continues to have the highest regional unemployment rate in Great Britain. Average weekly household incomes in the north are well below the national level, and the relative position is worsening. The region is becoming increasingly dependent on social security payments. The share of regionally relevant public expenditure in the north is declining and not enough public investment is taking place to match the scale of the region's problems.

Despite all these problems, during 1986 the region has again demonstrated its willingness and ability to help itself by the creation of the Northern Region Councils Association and the Northern Development Company. However, the problems are immense, and they are getting worse. Employment has continued to decline, with a further net loss of 3,000 jobs during the year. The north's traditional manufacturing industries continue to be the hardest hit. Major redundancies totalled more than 15,000 in the past year, of which 6,000 have been in coal mining. Growth in employment has been limited to the service sector, although this has been insufficient to replace employment losses elsewhere.

The latest employment projections for the region suggest that the current trend of employment decline will continue over the next four years. Gross domestic product in the north declined sharply during 1984 relevant to the United Kingdom, and Government support for regional industrial policy has continued to deteriorate in 1985-86, despite the decline of the region's economy.

One in five of the region's unemployed have now been out of work for more than three years. Youth unemployment has increased faster than the expansion of the youth training scheme. There is still a higher chance of becoming unemployed in the north than in any other region and one of the lowest chances of ceasing to be unemployed. The north has the lowest average weekly household income of all regions in Great Britain, and its relative position is worsening.

The region's perinatal mortality rate, to which the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) referred, increased in 1984, contrary to past trends, and the standardised mortality ratio continues to be the highest in England and Wales. A joint report by Bristol university and the Northern regional health authority, which has also been referred to, refers to inequalities of health in the northern region. I remind those hon. Gentlemen who are interested in this report that the Northern regional health authority, like others, is dominated by members appointed by the Government, so it could hardly be called a Socialist enclave. The main findings of the report demonstrate the strong link between the distribution of ill health and low income.

The north's share of national expenditure on roads has been falling, particularly compared with the south-east. The deregulation of bus services, which came into operation in October 1986, has led to a service that has been described as being in a "shocking state" and "unreliable and irregular" by the Conservative Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant).

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is talking about the Northern Development Company. Could he clarify what he and the company mean by the word "north", having regard to the fact that a Labour party briefing note refers to the north as

"all areas outside the Southern triangle of the South East, the South West and East Anglia"?

Is the hon. Gentleman referring to the north in those terms or in some other terms?

Mr. Clelland: I am referring to the northern region as defined by the Department of the Environment, which we all understand as the northern region—not the north that some people seem to believe starts north of the Watford Gap. These statistics refer to those counties that comprise the northern region of England.

That was a brief summary of the 1986 state of the region report, published this morning, which revealed that the north-south divide is still with us, and getting worse. As the report points out, the northern region has the highest unemployment rate in Britain at 17 per cent., which is 5 percentage points above the average for Great Britain. People in the area have the greatest likelihood of losing their jobs of any region in Great Britain, and it is the only region where the working population was actually smaller in 1984 than it was in 1974. Even worse, the number of people unemployed for over three years has doubled since 1983, to 43,000.

Those are the facts. The statistics are drawn up not by the Northern Region Councils Association but by the Government. They are the statistics of decline and decay. However, none of them can convey the real total of human misery. One cannot convey the despair and disillusion of a 50-year-old who has been told that his useful working life is finished as a result of a series of graphs on an economist's wall.

I have seen the reality of unemployment for myself. In the factory in which I worked for 22 years, I have seen grown men cry more tears than the Prime Minister could blink up in a lifetime. The frustration of a 19-year-old who has never worked and possibly never will cannot be conveyed by some fancy figures in the *Gazette*. Unemployment is not just a matter of economic statistics. It is a social condition and a state of mind. It is an individual blight and a family burden, as well as an economic loss to the whole community. Mass unemployment divides families and destroys lives. It brings bitterness as surely as it deepens despair. It is not only an economic catastrophe, but a human tragedy of immense proportions. We in the north are suffering the stark results of eight years of Conservative policy and prejudice.

Mr. Leadbitter: My hon. Friend is addressing the points set out in the motion. A specific example of the divisions might be helpful. This is one example of many. In my constituency, only three or four weeks ago, I met a young girl, who has a baby. She was living in an overcrowded house, and her only entitlement resulted in a benefit of £15 for herself and £8 for her child. This evening some of us will be sitting down in the Dining Room and spending that much on a meal.

Mr. Clelland: I note my hon. Friend's comments. There are many examples like the one that he underlined. Those examples counter earlier comments that people are now better off and that even those in the worst poverty are better off now then they have ever been. Hon. Members who believe that should face the problems and talk to people, like the girl my hon. Friend described, and try to convince them that they are better off now than they have ever been. Instead of the hope and harmony that the Prime Minister and her Government promised us back in 1979, they have delivered nothing but disillusionment and despair.

Our young people are steeped in hopelessness, our old are left feeling neglected and uncared for, the unemployed feel abandoned, the employed feel insecure, minorities are discriminated against and the majority live under the shadow of a nuclear holocaust. If Conservative Members do not believe that people on the street are not worried about those things, they are out of touch with reality.

What answers do the Government offer to tackle the root causes of those problems and divisions? They offer none. Even on law and order, the Government's central plank in the past two general election campaigns, the divisions are evident. Recent statistics show that in the Northumbria police force area, total crimes have risen by 68 per cent. since 1978, compared with the national average of 50 per cent. Violence against the person is up 57 per cent., compared with a national average of 44 per cent. Burglaries are up 83 per cent., compared with the national average of 66 per cent. Theft and the handling of stolen goods have risen 57 per cent., compared with the national average of 39 per cent. Criminal damage, including vandalism, is up 102 per cent., compared with the national average of 91 per cent.

That last statistic is most revealing. It is the sort of crime generally committed by young people. It shows the deprivation and desperation into which young people have been driven by the Government. The only statistic that is out of line with the pattern is that for fraud and forgery. In the northern region that is down 7 per cent. compared with a 9 per cent. increase nationally. That may reveal that in the northern region most people do not have the finances to buy a single share in their own name, let alone multiple shares in the names of one or two other people.

To resolve the problems, the Government have said that we need heavier penalties, weapons for the police and more spending. If that is so, why do those countries with the most heavily armed police forces suffer the highest crime rates? For every 1 per cent. increase in expenditure on the police force in this country over the past six years, why has there been a corresponding increase in crime? Why are the incidents of burglary on the poorest council estates four times higher than in middle class suburbia?

The answer is that crime is not directly related to the strengths or weaknesses of the forces of law and order. It is not sufficiently deterred by short, sharp shock treatment or long, hard prison sentences. Crime is related to the social conditions in which we live. It is fed by poverty and jealousy. It is fostered by discrimination and frustration. It is fuelled by hopelessness and idleness. That is why in the north Labour councils have been tackling both the causes and the effects of social disorder.

More police have been put back on the beat and even more have been requested. Our living environment has been improved, housing has been modernised, and there has been an increase of 66 per cent. in public housing renovation in the northern region compared with 12 per cent. nationally. There has also been a fall in the region of 60 per cent. in renovations in the private sector. Businesses have been helped by local authorities. Training and education have been provided for our young people. Much more needs be to done, remains to be done and certainly could be done if we had a Government who worked with the people instead of riding roughshod over them.

However, our achievements are being made in the face of a Government who withdraw finance from those local authorities that they cannot convince, rate-cap those that they cannot financially blackmail and abolish those with which they politically disagree. Because they have no answers, the Government brand all those who try to find

a solution as "Left-wing"—whatever that means in the Government's blinkered mind—or "soft on crime". That is not and never been true. Certainly, for my part, I abhor robbery of the homes of ordinary working people who have spent years and worked hard to build a home for their families, only to have it abused and vandalised and their possessions stolen. I detest violence, racism and hooliganism—and of course the perpetrators must be caught and punished. However, I have also always believed that rehabilitation is better than revenge and that prevention is better than cure. I have always believed that it is better to try to find answers to questions than to pretend that the questions do not exist.

Those problems can be tackled and answers can be found. A Labour Government will quickly begin to resolve the problem that is central to current social conditions—unemployment. For example, councils will be allowed to build and modernise homes. New systems of exchange controls will be introduced so that the billions of pounds currently flowing overseas, more than £60 billion in the past six years, can be diverted into British industry. Billions of pounds currently planned to be spent on American nuclear weapons systems will be saved. Instead, the money will be spent on conventional weapons for the defence of our country. Those earning the highest salaries will have to pay more to help the poorest.

All that, and more, will create work for our people. As more people find work and spending power increases, even more jobs will be created as demand for goods and services grows. That is not a dream or a false or impractical promise. It can be achieved if the Government have the will to do it. By that means, the frustration and hopelessness present in our country will begin to diminish. People will once more begin to have confidence and will be able to plan for the future.

However, the Government have no answer to unemployment or law and order. The Tories have nothing to offer; nor do their new partners in the new Tory party, the SDP. We discovered that during my by-election campaign just over a year ago. Before that there was more chance of spotting Lord Lucan in Gateshead high street than a member of the SDP. However, during the campaign they came flocking in almost as if their ringmaster had discovered that there was a stop called Tyne Bridge on their new circus route. We even spotted some familiar faces among the visitors. We saw John Horam, the former hon. Member for Gateshead, West who, like so many others in the SDP, was merely pausing on his way to the Tory party, and William Rodgers, a former Member of Parliament for Stockton.

Mr. Marlow: I see the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. I believe that the Liberals and the SDP—I am afraid that there is only one of them present so the point is somewhat missed—are hoping for what they call a balanced Parliament. That means that the balance of power, as I understand it, would be held by the Liberals and the SDP in the next Parliament. I think that the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) probably realises, as I realise, that if that were to happen, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and his party would actually coalesce with the Conservative party and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and his party would coalesce with the Labour party. What price an alliance in those circumstances?

Mr. Clelland: I shall develop that point later in my argument. However, the hon. Gentleman has agreed that the SDP is much closer to the Conservative party than to the Labour party.

Mr. Horam and Mr. Rodgers, to whom I have referred, and others in the SDP first won their seats in Parliament by standing as Labour candidates. They won easily because of the loyalty and, in many cases, the lifetime support for the Labour party of the experiences of people in the north of England. Hundreds of members and supporters tramped the streets for them in order to win for Labour. Having won their seats because they were Labour candidates, they decided to switch their allegiance and to betray their voters and supporters. They continued to collect their parliamentary salaries, and at no stage did they give any consideration to the fact that they had no support for their betrayal of their constituents. They were shown the way at the general election.

People in the north have no time for treachery. That is why the flood of visitors to Tyneside to support their candidate in the Tyne Bridge by-election did not help them. They swarmed in across the north-south divide, from Maidstone and Margate, from Bromley and Basingstoke, from Portsmouth and Poole, with street maps and copies of the Geordie good food guide tucked under their arms. Of course, we did not mind them coming to Tyneside and spending their money in the wine bars and restaurants; any assistance to our local economy is welcome. However, we do not need to take lectures on politics from people whose life experience and interest is confined within the few weeks of a by-election campaign. They share neither our values nor our background, so how can they understand our problems or our hopes? They are not of us, so how can they hope to represent us?

We need in power a party that broadly represents the views and aspirations of ordinary families. Only the Labour party offers the prospect of real hope, real harmony and real chances to the people of Britain—all of Britain.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), in his capacity as leader of the Labour party, in his speech to the Labour party conference in 1985, spoke of the "life opportunities" that had been extended to him by the Labour party and previous Labour Governments, and last year he appealed to the moral majority in our country. He spoke with a passion, a conviction and an understanding that can come only from the son of an ordinary working family. He expressed the feelings of the vast majority of people in this country, because, like him, wherever we live, we all owe everything to two groups of people—our parents, who struggled to ensure that we would have a better life than they had, and the Labour movement, which provided the opportunities to build that better life for ourselves and our children: the opportunity of education, the opportunity to have a decent home and, perhaps, one day even, yes, to own our own home, the chance of a decent job, a fair wage when in work, dignity when out of work and a secure retirement when the working life is over. For all of that we owe a debt of honour to those who fought and sacrificed before our time. They did not fight and they did not make sacrifices in order to build a society that could be so easily divided between north and south and between rich and poor, and we who follow them will not be diverted or subdued by temporary statistics.

[Mr. Clelland]

The people of the north know, as, in their hearts, do the vast majority of our people, that the divisions in our country can be healed and that such a process is essential to the development of a civilised society. They also know that the Conservative party has neither the desire nor the philosophy to do it. The Government have surely demonstrated that fact, in crystal clarity, over the past eight years of conflict and division. The people also know that the alliance cannot do it. An alliance which is divided into two distinct political parties with two distinct political philosophies cannot hope to convince the nation that it will be a uniting force. In addition, the alliance does not possess a single policy for healing the divisions that it would not be willing to bargain away to win a seat in a coalition Cabinet.

If our people genuinely want something effective done about unemployment, poverty, insecurity, conflict and divisions—as I believe they do—there is only one way to achieve it, and that is to elect a Labour Government. The people know it, and they will do it.

7.23 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I came down from the midlands this morning because I was confident that the debate would be controversial and far-ranging and that there would be a highly charged atmosphere in the House.

I am disappointed, because although this is an Opposition day and they have devoted all of it to one debate, and they are obviously sincere about their motion, that sincerity is not shared by all Labour Members. As we look out across the empty Opposition Benches, we must wonder how determined the Opposition are to solve what they believe is a serious problem of a north-south divide.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the deputy Leader of the Opposition, moved the motion in a way that made Rambling Sid Rumpole look positively specific, stayed to hear the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and then left the Chamber and has not been seen since. Again, we must wonder how sincere the Opposition are about the motion.

This is an important time in our political history. The memoirs of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), the former Prime Minister, are being published in the *Sunday Times*. If we needed reminding of the divisions in our society, we see them line by line as the right hon. Gentleman recounts the story of that last Labour Government.

Mr. Marlow: Not "that" last Labour Government; "the" last Labour Government.

Mr. King: Yes, the last Labour Government and the winter of discontent. We can see what discontent and division really meant; the trade union movement argued with the elected Government, people could not agree and the whole nation suffered.

That time is history now and about 6 million new voters will barely remember it, though they have history books and the *Sunday Times* to tell them what happened. I hope that they will read those memoirs carefully and learn from them. They show what happened when we had a Labour Government who were bent on creating one nation but ended up causing divisions throughout society. Given Labour's record, we cannot take the motion seriously.

I am also sorry that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is absent, because I wish to refer to something that is being exported from London to Birmingham tomorrow. Two of Labour's prospective parliamentary candidates are coming to Birmingham to talk about black separatism in politics. We do not want that in Birmingham. We stand 100 per cent. behind the Labour party and its deputy leader in saying that we do not want that sort of thing exported from London to Birmingham. It is a sort of political apartheid and is racist in many ways. It must be, because that is what those prospective candidates stand for. How can we debate the motion before us when that sort of thing is being condoned by the Labour party because it does not have the guts to tell those people to desist from such goings on? I am convinced that the people of Birmingham, who will soon be voting in local elections, will inwardly digest what happens tomorrow and will learn from it.

The nation has gone through a traumatic time as a result of the legacy of poor industrial relations, outmoded production equipment and the ravages of overseas competition. There was an easy solution. The Government could have kept open all the mines and the steelworks and said, "We shall go on making cars for which there are no buyers because the quality is no good and we shall keep all businesses open because we do not want any unemployment." But if we had had that sort of Socialist, planned society we should now be in a disastrous mess.

It took guts and courage for the Government to say that they would not featherbed the future and take the easy option. The only way in which this country can survive post-Empire, post-Commonwealth, and standing alone as an island nation — admittedly, within the European Community, but, nevertheless, with a separate economic identity — is to make the right products of the right quality, with the highest productivity and efficiency, and to sell them on a discerning world market. In many industries we are at long last seeing the rewards of having embarked on that policy.

Nobody seriously considers, as has been suggested by some Opposition Members, that we can take back all the people who have been shed from the coal mines, the steel industry, the railways and the other state undertakings and give them gainful employment. My constituency of Northfield includes Austin Rover's Longbridge factory, which used to employ 23,000 people, but now employs 12,500 people. Nobody is seriously suggesting that it should be committed to taking back another 10,000 people to provide them with work. Although the company is taking on about 1,000 people, our problem is that, in the next era of technology, machinery will be even more robotised and even more productively efficient and will require fewer people to make an ever greater quantity of manufactured goods. That is the challenge that we face. No one political creed will get us off that hook. We must tackle the problem bravely and take up the challenge that it offers in creating investment in our infrastructure, which will create wealth.

Time and time again Opposition Members have been telling us how they will spend the country's wealth. They say that they will provide more schools, give higher pensions and higher this and that, but they do not say a word about how the wealth will be created. Conservative

Members have been trying to explain for the last seven years or so that we must create the wealth before we spend it. The miracle is that we have managed to do both. We are now creating real wealth, by seven years of uninterrupted economic growth and many more to come. We have maintained the level of public investment within our public facilities, the National Health Service, education, pensions and so on and we have increased the benefits all round. That has come about because of our fiscal policies, which have given us good value for money.

Mr. Leadbitter: It is important that, in a debate such as this, we follow each other and at least try to be objective. I find some difficulty in that. The hon. Gentleman gave us a list of how much more has been spent on pensions, and so on. I was rather puzzled when he was talking about the Labour programme to take certain measures in these sectors. He said that we were going to have some difficulty in finding the necessary resources and that, if we undertook those measures, we would be acting irresponsibly. To clear the matter up, and so that I may know whether I should follow my Labour party colleagues in the next few months, will the hon. Gentleman help me in my dilemma?

Mr. King: I should be delighted to do so. No one has ever had such a wonderful opportunity to drum into people exactly what the Government have done. The Labour party has presented today, as in the past, its shopping list of what it wants to spend. At the last count, it simply said that it intended to spend £30 billion. I do not quote that figure to my constituents, because they do not believe that anybody could come up with such a figure, so I halve it to £15 billion to get it down to a credible level, but they are still amazed that any political party can commit itself to such expenditure before it has established how it will create it.

Mr. Leadbitter: The figure of £30 billion was not mentioned by the Labour party. The figure was increased by the Conservative party from £28 billion. Even that is chickenfeed in terms of the £21 billion that it costs to keep people out of work.

Mr. King: Taken over 10 years that might be a realistic figure, but, taking it from year to year, the Labour party is not prepared for, and cannot commit itself to, the creation of all these extra jobs without a great deal of expenditure first in the hope that it can create them. If it sets out to pump £6 billion into the economy in the hope that it will save the same by a reduction in unemployment levels, it must still pay those on the unemployment queue while the jobs are theoretically being created. It is having to maintain its expenditure on unemployment at the same time as it is stepping up its expenditure on investment. That does not make economic sense, and I think that most people will accept that.

Mr. Leadbitter: Only a few weeks ago, in the Budget, we found that billions of pounds were sloshing about in the Treasury and £6 billion was given away. If the £21 billion to keep nearly 3·5 million people out of work could be reduced to about £10 billion, and the remaining people brought into work, that would mean only a shift of resources. It would not involve spending an extra penny.

Mr. King: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman has the level of money that was given away in the Budget —£6 billion—exactly right. I understand that a good portion of that money was spent on the reduction of borrowing, which was immediately reflected by a reduction in interest charges and a reduction in mortgage costs, thus bringing down the cost of living for most people. The costs of production in industry were also brought down, as was inflation, thereby creating more jobs, which is welcome.

We are poised before an era of substantial expansion in the motor industry, which will create many new opportunities. Ford, Vauxhall, and Peugeot Talbot are committed to making more cars in this country, and the cars that they make will use components sourced largely from this country.

We do not hear too much about investment in the north-east, because it is difficult to reconcile that with some trade union thinking and the thinking of some of the other mainstream members of the Labour party. The introduction of Nissan into this country is one section of a substantial Japanese investment in manufacturing that is gaining pace over the length and breadth of this country. Telford has almost become a little Japan as a result of attracting thousands of job opportunities with Japanese companies. I have been to Nissan in Sunderland and it is gratifying to see people gainfully employed in producing products that will ensure the future of that area and give the workers job security. I accept that many Opposition Members deplore such investment coming from Japan because they believe that that is at the expense of our goods and products. I am from a Brummy car-making constituency, and we will build a better car than a Geordie ever will.

Mr. Clelland: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying about investment in the north-east by Nissan. Another Japanese company, Komatsu, has also invested in the north-east. However, that is not necessarily solely because of the Government's activities. Before the Tyne and Wear county council was abolished, it was principally responsible for Nissan coming to the area. It was certainly responsible for Komatsu coming to Tyne and Wear. Although this is welcome, there are problems. We have seen the example of Caterpillar in Glasgow. We need an indigenous industry in the area. These industries have created only 800 jobs, yet we have lost 15,000 through redundancies.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that Nissan and other Japanese companies have come to this country only because, after seven or eight years, we have created the right industrial climate in which they can invest. There is no getting away from that argument.

Much of our education leaves much to be desired, which is why the Government have embarked on a major programme of educational reform, appraisal of the role of teachers and a decent pay scale for teachers, which I hope they will be ready to accept in the not too distant future. In Birmingham we have something that is dear to everyone who lives there—our King Edward foundation schools. Those schools fly in the face of Labour policy. There is a degree of selectivity about those who attend the four or five schools in the city. The local Labour party is dedicated to doing away with them, as is the national Labour party. Despite that, many Labour people who occupy positions of authority, and many people throughout industry, attended these schools, to the betterment of themselves, the city and the country.

[Mr. King]

Some selectivity is involved in those city schools, but they provide an opportunity for everyone. If a child is capable enough, he or she can go to one of these schools and receive special attention. Is it right to deny that opportunity to everyone because of a Socialistic ideal to eliminate all choice? I am sure that it is not, but the Labour party is keen to introduce that policy. In its misguided belief in eliminating choice, and therefore doing away with the so-called social divides, it will increase those divides. Those who want their children to have a special education will have to buy it in the market place, either in this country or abroad, as the Leader of the Opposition said, "when we have finished."

Mr. Cash: Taking my hon. Friend's point a bit further, does he agree that if people are given the opportunity to have the highest quality education that is available through the system that he has described it will be possible for them to help others to get work? Their management skills will be much better. Therefore, everyone will benefit. My hon. Friend's point applies not only to the present generation but to future generations. Real leadership, management and skills are developed through the education system.

Mr. King: That is right. My hon. Friend has put it succinctly.

Throughout Birmingham and the midlands the position of the Health Service is encouraging. New hospitals are coming into commission at Telford and Redditch and many new projects are on the books or have been started, including the £27 million new hospital being built just outside my constituency. We welcome those developments. We should not necessarily look at the Health Service through waiting lists, although it is gratifying to note that they went up and up under Labour and have gone down and down under the Conservative Government. The benchmark for deciding how effective the NHS is must be the number of patients for whom it cares. There cannot be any other way of deciding how good a health service is. The efficiency of a factory is measured by what it produces. A great big factory can produce nothing. A poor factory can have incredibly high production. We should look at the Health Service in terms of the numbers treated in it. The numbers of in-patients and out-patients are at record high levels.

Birmingham shares the housing problems which are manifest throughout Britain and which are largely the problems of local Labour authorities. We often wonder how the money is spent on housing repairs and home improvements. Substantial sums go into Birmingham's coffers, and almost all the money is spent, although usually the authority underspends by £2 million or £3 million. The authority keeps saying that it wants to build more houses, but, if we ever had the opportunity to do so, where would they be built? The city is hemmed in by green-belt land and it will not be easy to find a satisfactory solution to that difficult problem.

The housing problem is exacerbated by quite a big divide in terms of what personal conduct is socially responsible. I do not want to condemn anyone, but it seems to me—some of my colleagues have mentioned this recently—that too great a strain is placed on society by the one-parent family and that the right and expectation of a one-parent family to have a home have been extended too far. The right of a young girl, as soon as she has left school, to become pregnant, put her name on the housing list and be given accommodation as soon as the council can provide it is causing untold problems throughout the housing structure of Birmingham and elsewhere. [AN HON. MEMBER: "It is the law."] It is indeed the law, but I wonder whether there should be a change in our social outlook so that society says that our young people have certain responsibilities within the community.

Single parents are an accepted fact. This is becoming a way of life in our cities, with all the social problems that it causes. I do not want laws that prevent or ban single-parent families or deprive them of their rights, but society should point out that those people have responsibilities to society generally to provide for their families as much as they can. Individuals should not just seek a commitment from the state and community from the moment they seek to become a family.

Birmingham has suffered substantially from a lack of industrial expansion throughout the west midlands because of the rates levy inflicted by the local authority on industry and domestic householders. During the past two years there has been a rates increase of more than 60 per cent., which has played a major part in slowing the growth of industrial expansion. This expansion has been much lower that it would have been had the local authority adopted more prudent fiscal policies. The crippling local rate has had a dramatic effect on the retailing sector. More than anything else, this is reflected in vacant shop units throughout the city and the difficulties of regenerating much of the inner city. I am happy that some expansion is taking place. A convention centre, which includes a hotel complex, is being built for £120 million. This will guarantee a strong future over the next few years for Birmingham.

We are confident that Birmingham can solve its problems satisfactorily. There is not necessarily a problem of Left versus Right. We have tried to maintain a consensus in politics, although that is not to say that we cannot and do not substantially criticise the present local Labour administration. We object to and strongly deplore any imported sectarianism. We want to be left to get on with our own thing and to be free from as much restriction as possible. Given the true Brummy values of thrift and efficiency, our city will prosper. Indeed, it is prospering. This will lead the city and the nation into a very prosperous next few years.

7.47 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on the manner in which he delivered his copious speech without copious notes. He seemed to make his speech with his eye on the 7 May local election, and possibly a general election. I am sure that a young lady of 16 who is in some difficulty and is looking for some type of accommodation would not be especially impressed by the hon. Gentleman's unfeeling attitude. Although I fully accept that he believes in the Conservative values which he carefully articulated, a certain unfeeling and uncaring attitude came through, and the hon. Gentleman might wish to reflect on that between now and the general election. I am sure that the good workers in the Nissan factory on Tyneside would not agree with his remarks that the car manufacturers in Birmingham are as equal as the car manufacturers in the north-east.

I should like briefly to state the Labour party's attitude to Nissan and companies like it. Of course we accept Japanese investment in Britain. It is better that the Japanese should invest their capital here than export their unemployment. But their Nissan investment on Tyneside will not even touch the unemployment in Cleveland. About 4,000 jobs at Nissan have been created over four years, but about 50,000 people have lost their jobs since 1979.

The hon. Member for Northfield was good enough to accept that the Government were responsible for unemployment. He said that no one could imagine that the work lost in the steel industry or in the coal mines could be made up. He said that the workers affected could not be taken back. It was significant that the hon. Gentleman accepted that in 1979 the Government had no confidence in the British people or British workers and were not prepared to defend our steel industry or coal mines. We have felt the consequences on Teesside where the work force in the steel industry has dropped from about 27,000 in 1979 to about 6,500 and it is still dropping. That has had serious consequences for the vitality of the commercial and industrial structure of our area. It is right to say that those jobs cannot be recreated immediately.

Smith's dock is next door to my constituency, and when I made my maiden speech in 1983 I committed myself to preserving jobs there. Unfortunately, the Government continued their monetarist policy and their theorising on industrial policy and Smith's dock eventually closed. We hope that it will not be lost entirely.

Many areas of Teesside have been converted into green field sites as a result of the Government's policies. As I said earlier, those policies show no confidence in the British work force, and certainly no confidence in Teesside. Nothing that we have heard in this debate shows that that attitude will change in the next few years.

I detect a certain arrogance and overweening confidence on the Government Back Benches. I have always taken the view that pride comes before a fall, and it may well be that the fall will come earlier for the Government than they imagine.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bell: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). I know that he represents a neighbouring constituency, but he has not followed the entire debate and it would be unfair of me to allow him to intervene. He may certainly try to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]* I will not take any insults from the hon. Gentleman. He has just come into the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman is never in the Chamber when we deal with important matters. He was not here on Wednesday when we had an important debate. I will not accept sedentary interventions from the hon. Gentleman.

The motion says:

"this House notes with concern the increasing divisions within British society".

No Conservative Member has said that he is opposed to that part of the motion. No Conservative Member has said that Government policies are not creating divisions in our society. The motion

"condemns the Government for the constant pursuit of policies which have widened these divisions".

No Conservative Member has said that that is not the case. The Government's case is not that their policies widen the divisions, but that the divisions will be widened and that we will have to live with them.

The motion also says that the House

"looks forward to the time when a Government is elected which is committed to the creation of one nation."

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment said that he is a one-nation Tory. How can he create a one-nation state by following the divisive two-nation policies of the Right wing of the Conservative party and the Prime Minister? He was not able to tell us that; he simply used the phrase as his peroration. Nothing in the policies of the Government is likely to bring about one nation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) spoke about the state of the region report. His speech clearly showed the divide that exists between north and south, a divide that is being reinforced.

On Saturday I was in Finchley, in the constituency of the Prime Minister. I met many people there who are concerned about unemployment. It is wrong to believe that those who are working are not concerned about the fate of those who are not. They have a genuine concern for the unemployed. It is ironic that in Finchley about 1,000 jobs will be lost between now and next May as a result of a factory closure. The seepage of job losses from the north to the south is continuing right up to the Prime Minister's constituency.

I should like to speak about the inequalities that have been created in Middlesbrough by Government policies on housing. Notwithstanding that 80 per cent. of the proceeds of sales of council houses remain frozen in the bank, the district council has opened new housing developments in St. Hilda's and in the town centre. There have been major modernisation schemes at Netherfields and in Grove hill.

We are aware that of the cuts in my constituency the cuts in housing have been deepest and, most important, have put a serious strain on the community. Not enough improvement grants are available for town centre development, and that problem has been made particularly acute because expectations were raised in the early 1980s about the availability of grants. Middlesbrough now faces the prospect of future housng clearance if the council cannot maintain the repair and improvement of our old homes.

It is equally the case that not enough new houses are being built to meet the housing need. Not only is there a lengthy waiting list in Middlesbrough, but there is a net shortage of houses of all types to meet the projected housing need. The slow progress of improvement schemes also means that even in the 1980s some families are living in conditions more appropriate to the 1920s. We had hoped that those times were long past, but they are rapidly coming again for many of my constituents. Demand is increasing and homelessness is becoming a major problem. We need a rapid expansion of the housing programme to meet the needs facing us.

From the Government we have seen a fundamental and long-drawn-out attack upon the lives of those in local communities all over Britain. Certainly that has been the case for my constituents. There has been an unprecedented turnaround in the relationship between central and local government since the Conservatives took office in 1979. That has been even more heightened since 1983. I shall give some examples from my constituency.

[Mr. Bell]

The capital controls have reduced our housing capital budget by more than 60 per cent. Revenue controls have restricted our expenditure and at the same time the burden of meeting that expenditure has been pushed on to the backs of ratepayers by changes in the rate support grant. The inner area programme that was originally intended to revitalise the inner area has been subjected to more and more Government control and restriction of the finance available. A task force has been imposed upon the town by the Paymaster General. It is run by civil servants and has no democratic input.

We have also seen the emergence of an urban development corporation with what the Government would call significant resources of about £160 million. That has been announced well before a general election, but we will not see the colour of the money for many months—if we see the money at all. There will be no democratic accountability to local people and no genuine input from Teesside or from the Middlesbrough area. The county council and the district council have schemes similar to those that will be a part of the urban development corporation programme.

The council's expenditure limit and rate in the pound have been limited by the rate-capping procedure. The Government propose to enforce privatisation policies regardless of the views of locally elected representatives and the views of the people that they serve. The latest idea is a poll tax. That will significantly alter the burden of rates by increasing the burden on the least well off.

These major changes are not only an affront to local democracy and to the democratically expressed wishes of people in places such as Middlesbrough, but a dangerous trend towards centralising power in the hands of an authoritarian and inflexible Government. *[Interruption.]* They are also impracticable. This has been demonstrated by the complete shambles in which local financial arrangements have been placed by the Government's constant intervention. It is quite clear that it is impossible for central Government to run local communities, particularly when the Government are antagonistic to the views and needs of that community. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Langbaurgh seems particularly agitated. That is possibly because there is an election coming. His majority will disappear into thin air and he will lose his seat. He ought to spend his time in the House enjoying the atmosphere and the debates rather than indulging in sedentary interventions.

Finally, I should like to speak about economic development and unemployment in my area and to deal briefly with the background to that unemployment.

The present unemployment crisis is no accident of history, as the hon. Member for Northfield confirmed when he said that it was not Government policy to keep coal mines open or to fortify and encourage the steel industry with investment and Government orders. The present crisis is the creation of Tory policies which have severely cut public investment and privatised many public services. The hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) made an interesting speech in which he condemned the Labour party for its support of subsidies but then listed a host of subsidies that his constituency had received from the Government and of which he was apparently proud.

The crisis of doom and gloom spread by the Government throughout the north of England and in many ways throughout the country is nowhere more severely felt than in Middlesbrough. The latest unemployment figures are 29 per cent. for men and 14·8 per cent. for women, after excluding people over the age of 60, the long-term unemployed, people on youth training schemes and other short-term Government schemes; and the figures are even higher for young people and ethnic minorities.

The Paymaster General and the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) touched on certain aspects of economic policy and the Labour retrenchment of 1977. The reason for that retrenchment was the oil price rise of 1974. The Paymaster General said that the retrenchment in the economy which led to job losses between 1979 and 1981 was also caused by oil prices and in a sense he was right. Oil prices had risen, and unemployment went up as well. But he did not say that in 1979 we had the medium-term financial strategy devised by the then Chancellor and by the then Financial Secretary, who is now Chancellor. Here I render homage to the hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), who has sat through this debate as parliamentary private secretary to the present Chancellor.

If some blame for the increase in unemployment between 1979 and 1981 attaches to oil prices, the medium-term financial strategy, the setting of unrealistic monetary targets, the high value of $2·50 set for the pound by the then Chancellor, the very high interest rates of 21 per cent. then prevailing and the high inflation rate given to us by the then Chancellor were the direct cause of a million job losses in manufacturing industry which have not been made up since 1983. The hon. Member for Northfield, in a slip of the tongue, referred to seven years continuous growth, but even the Chancellor would not go back any further than 1981.

Mr. Lilley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bell: I have already said how pleased we are to see the hon. Gentleman here as parliamentary private secretary to the Chancellor. If he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he can make his own speech. It will be interesting to hear his master's voice from the Back Benches.

Mr. Lilley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bell: Unemployment——

Mr. Lilley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When an hon. Member repeatedly refers by name to another hon. Member who has been present throughout the debate but has not put in to speak, is it not customary to allow that hon. Member to intervene?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is entirely a matter for the hon. Member who has the Floor, but it is the convention.

Mr. Bell: I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging the convention. He has been kind enough to attribute near-miraculous powers to me, including events which occurred in the first Conservative Parliament when I was not even a Member of Parliament, let alone PPS to anyone. Since I have been a Member of the House, a million jobs have been created. I should like to be able to claim credit for that, but I think that the credit largely belongs to the Government.

Mr. Bell: If the hon. Gentleman has been here all the time, he must have been asleep for some of it. I did not

attribute to him the role of Chancellor or even Financial Secretary in 1979. His master's voice was Financial Secretary at the time and was responsible for the medium-term financial strategy which has since been quietly jettisoned. If the Government had really created a million jobs since 1983, we should have applauded and welcomed that, but they have not created a million full-time jobs. They have created jobs which in the 1950s were part-time, pin-money, pirate jobs with low status and no security of tenure. If a million real jobs had been created, we should have welcomed that, but the Government's figure is not valid.

In Middlesbrough, 11,900 able-bodied men and women are unemployed. That is 29 per cent. of the work force. I have already described the conditions that I found in Finchley at the weekend. The cost of unemployment in direct and indirect taxes forgone, in lost national insurance contributions and in benefit payments, now exceeds £21 billion per year, as the hon. Member for Northfield has said. That is the proportion of our national wealth that is systematically and deliberately poured down the drain by the Government year in, year out. It is an average of £6,557 per unemployed person nationally, or an annual cost of £67 million in Middlesbrough. While the Government create urban development corporations and think tanks and put £1 million into inner-area development, the cost to our town is £67 million or £599 per working person per year.

That is the reality on Teesside of the divide that the Government have created in the past seven years and which will continue if the British people do not see through the Government's hard-faced attitude towards unemployed people. I do not believe for one moment that that will happen, because all the opinion polls show that the people of this country are most concerned about unemployment. For 70 per cent. of them it is the major issue. When the election comes, the British people in their wisdom and knowledge will take the first opportunity to turn the Government out and send them back to history where they belong.

8.7 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I intend to be brief. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is no longer here as I must say how much I enjoyed his speech and how much we Conservatives look forward to his joining us after the election. It will not be in his present alliance with the boy David, as he affectionately describes his right hon. Friend, because the chance of their participating in political power in my political lifetime is certainly remote. We know that the right hon. Member for Devonport is very ambitious and he is not getting any younger, so there is only one way ahead for him—to join the Conservative party. It is my fervent hope, however—God willing, it will be granted—that when he does so he will not be drafted into an economic Department, as he got into a frightful mess in his speech today.

The right hon. Gentleman first suggested that the benefits to those out of work should be increased significantly. One may take a view about that. He also intended to give benefits to the low-paid who were in work, but the benefit to be given to the latter was to be significantly less than that to be given to the former. We are all aware of the great quandary, conundrum and problem of the "why work" syndrome.

I was once doing some work with a company in Nottingham in the north midlands. I had a long discussion with a person there who was responsible for recruiting the people that one might call hewers of wood and drawers of water—the less highly paid employees of that company. He said that if he had men between the ages of 20 and 45 with family commitments and had offered four of them jobs, one of them would have turned it down on the grounds that he was better off staying at home, not working and drawing benefit. The right hon. Member for Devonport suggested that, instead of one out of four declining to take available work, he would prefer two of the four to do so. For that reason I hope that the right hon. Gentleman never has anything to do with an economic Department.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro) *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

We know that the Liberals and the SDP are very much in favour of an inflation tax. That means that there will be a law, and every company in the land will be permitted to pay a certain level of wage increases each year. If they want to pay a higher increase, the state will claw it back in increased taxation. The way in which the economy works is that, if a company is successful, it may want to increase its labour force by recruiting more labour. To do that, a company may wish to pay more wages. The policy of the right hon. Member for Devonport would ensure that those companies that were doing well would be penalised by being charged higher rates of tax than any other company in the region.

If we want to increase the wealth of the community and the prosperity of the nation in order—as we all want to do — to care for those who are unfortunate in our society, that is not the way to do it.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is a little confused about one aspect. The alliance is grasping the nettle of reforming our tax and benefit proposals so that those who work will gain more than those who are out of work, unlike what happens under the present system. Surely the hon. Gentleman welcomes the alliance proposals on that?

Mr. Marlow: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber to hear the speech made by the right hon. Member for Devonport. I know that there are frictions between the two parties. If he had listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman he would have heard him say what I said that he said: that more should be given to those out of work and less to those in work.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman inform the House a little further about one matter? He obviously has an insight into what the leader of the SDP will be doing after the election. How long after the election will the right hon. Member for Devonport join the Conservative ranks? That could be important, because when the Leader of the Opposition dishes out the portfolios after the election that, too, might coincide with the right hon. Gentleman receiving a portfolio.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is an old friend, and has a sense of humour. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) was speaking of "that last Labour Government," and I corrected that to "the last

[Mr. Marlow]

Labour Government". I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), because I love him dearly. There will not be another Labour Government.

So much for the Liberals and the SDP. I intend to be very brief. The motion on the Order Paper states:

"That this House notes with concern the increasing divisions within British society".

I understand that it was tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. That is a bit rich, is it not? It is a camouflage job. Here is the Labour party, complaining about divisions in society, and it is the self-same Labour party that is creating those divisions.

There have been discussions in the House about what has been known as the north-south divide. Sophisticates and people who have studied the issue recently say that it is not a north-south divide, but an east-west one because more trade is moving to the east and less to the west. But even that is not true. If one looks at the statistics for unemployment, one must look elsewhere. As Opposition Members have said, the picture is patchy. An examination of the statistics shows that five of the 12 constituencies in England and Wales with the highest levels of unemployment—with almost a third of the total male population unemployed and drawing benefit—are here in London in the wealthy south-east, where there are piles of jobs, and where anyone can get work. In the south-east, the economy is booming, yet five out of the 12 constituencies are here.

Where are those constituencies—Bow and Poplar, Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, Peckham, Southwark and Bermondsey and Vauxhall. What do those constituencies have in common apart from being in London? They all have Labour local authorities. If one takes the analysis further, one realises that it is not a north-south or east-west divide. The areas in which there are divisions, in which there is crime, unemployment and bad housing, are Labour areas

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham North-West): Would the hon. Gentleman care to conjecture, for the benefit of the House, why the highest unemployment in the United Kingdom is in Belfast?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the fact. We know that the hon. Gentleman specialises in red herrings. His remarks have nothing to do with the issue. There are special circumstances in Belfast, one of which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is the violence between the two communities in Northern Ireland. That is one of the regional problems of Belfast—problems that the hon. Gentleman and his party do not do a great deal to put right.

Where Socialism is rampant, business confidence is low. The right hon. Gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition, lives with his wife, Greenham Glenys, in Ealing. This year, the right hon. Gentleman's rates will go up by £21 a week. I dare say that in Ealing there are also small businesses trying to generate wealth and jobs to benefit the economy.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): There are not many left.

Mr. Marlow: There will not be, after the increase in rates. Where there is Socialism, jobs are destroyed. It is not just a matter of high rates; it is a matter of local authorities mismanaging housing. It is an issue of local——

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I shall not give way. On second thoughts, I shall.

Mr. Holt: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend, who sat and heard the hon. Member for Middlesborough (Mr. Bell) refuse to give way to me, on the basis that I had not been here earlier. I notice that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, having made his speech, has already gone. Does my hon. Friend agree that, however bad things are for the leader of the Labour party and his wife, they are not nearly as bad as for the people of Middlesbrough, who have the highest rates in the country?

Mr. Marlow: I sympathise with my hon. Friend, and I take it that he lives under a Labour-controlled authority?

Mr. Holt: Yes.

Mr. Marlow: That is my thesis. Those five areas in London are run by Labour authorities, and have the highest levels of unemployment in the country. However, in London as a whole there are plenty of jobs. It is not only a matter of having destroyed jobs in those areas by high rates and socialist policies. Why do not the people in those constituencies move outside them—hop on a bus or a bicycle—to somewhere else in London? The jobs are available: why do not they take them? There are reasons for the fact that they will not take jobs outside the areas in which they live. They will not do so because of the slums in which they live, which have been mismanaged by Labour authorities——

Mr. Caborn: What a load of rubbish.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman says that it is rubbish. One person in five in inner London does not pay his rent. There are arrears of one fifth of the rent roll in inner London. There are more empty houses in London because they are not properly managed. The housing situation in inner London is appalling. They are slums, run by Labour authorities.

The position is worse than that, however. The education that is provided in inner London is also appalling. I understand that it costs as much for the Inner London education authority to provide secondary education in the public sector as it costs to provide it in the private sector. Yet the exam results in the public sector are appalling, just as the attitude of the children in those schools is appalling. They live in bad housing and they come out of school ill-educated—those of them who stay in school, because one third of 15-year-olds in the Inner London education authority area are absconding from school and playing truant on a daily basis.

That is the attitude. That is how those children have been brought up. They do not look for work because they do not want work because the attitudes that they have been given under Socialism have turned them against work. They have been alienated. If one goes round setting up bent race relations industries and telling people that they are racially discriminated against, they will feel alienated and discriminated against. If one goes round setting up anti-police committees and telling people that the police are against them, they will be against the police.

If they are against the police, they will be more in favour of crime and they will be more violent. The children of Socialism are disrupting our inner city areas. Socialism is the problem.

Socialism sows the seeds of spite, and it is not surprising that we have a harvest of grudge and dependence and attitudes that are not conducive to work. There are two classes in society—not upper class, middle class and working class, but the dependent classes and the independent classes. The Socialists in the Labour party want to make us all into dependent classes—dependent on the Government and the local authority for housing; dependent on the Government and the local authority for education; and dependent on the Government and the local authority for pensions and jobs. Through this dependence, Socialism gets its support and its voters. It wants clients who will vote for Socialism.

If people get their own houses and if they have a choice over their own education, they will not vote Socialist any more. This is the problem for the Labour party. It is poised on the precipice of terminal decline, and the sooner it falls over, the better. Socialism preaches that we can have paradise without effort and that if we do not get paradise without effort, it is someone else's fault. As the song says in "Les Misérables", at the end of the day, you get nothing for nothing. It is a con trick of Socialism, which has destroyed many lives, that Socialists pretend to people that they can get something for nothing. They cannot. If one is looking round the country to where the deprivation is, where the unemployment is, where the problems of law and order are and where the bad education is, one sees that it is all in Socialist local authority areas. When it comes to the next election, the country will realise that if it wants deprivation, unemployment and degradation, it should vote Socialist.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that six hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye, and we have about an hour before the first Front Bench spokesman will seek to catch my eye. The arithmetic is obvious.

8.23 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), because I wish to make a few points about the terrible problems in south Yorkshire and in my city of Sheffield. Not only many hon. Members, but many independent boldies, have made clear the divide between north and south. Despite what the hon. Member for Northampton, North said, the realities shine through, and many people regard the problem as very serious. It is not just a matter of statistics. There is human misery in the north-south divide. I see that human misery in my constituency, which has the highest unemployment among under-25s in the United Kingdom. Underneath the effects that we can see in crime figures and muggings are serious problems of depression and of people looking inwards instead of helping society in other ways.

One of the Government's worst actions has been their attack on local democracy, which has hamstrung many authorities which are trying genuinely to resolve some of the problems of unemployment and deprivation and the social problems which follow in the wake of massive unemployment. Local authorities are a major safety valve in society. They have played a useful role, and the attack on them during the past seven years has been disgraceful. The con trick that the Government have tried to play—people are beginning to see through them—is to reduce local authority grants, with the result that authorities have had to decide whether to increase rates or to reduce the services that are needed by many people in their communities. In many areas, such as Sheffield, they have decided to increase rates, but it was not their choice. If they had the choice, they would still want a balance and a partnership between central and local government.

The Church of England report entitled "Faith in the City" outlined the problems clearly——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Caborn: The Paymaster General shakes his head, but that report was well researched and well founded. Unfortunately, he and his colleagues decided to go in the opposite direction. That has had extremely serious consequences for many deprived areas.

The press—there are not many of its representatives here this evening—and the Government have not given much praise to the report by Her Majesty's inspectors on the Sheffield local education authority. It says that it is in good shape. A press release from the Department of Education and Science dated 31 March states:

"Education in Sheffield's schools and colleges demonstrates a range of good quality and generally satisfactory work and provides a sound basis for future development, says a report by Her Majesty's Inspectors published today. The report states that much of the work in primary schools was of a good standard. Particularly encouraging was the attention given to science, health education, home studies and environmental education. Outstanding work occurred most often in nursery and infant schools where language and mathematics were characterised by lively teaching and the excellent use of practical activities. In the secondary schools there was a great deal of sound and conscientious work. Some aspects were particularly strong, including geography, personal and social development, residential work experience and links with industry. Provision for non-advanced further education was wide-ranging, generally economical and by and large effective. In addition adult education and youth and community work are of an impressive quality.

HMI state that Sheffield takes education seriously and there is a belief in the responsibilities and importance of education in improving and enhancing individual and social life. The authority has developed a wide range of well thought out policies in response to educational needs arising from local circumstances, although these have varied in their effectiveness. The most effective translation of policies into practice came about because of clear organisation, efficient and effective support, regular evaluation, and the open-mindedness to change direction once evaluation revealed that intentions were not being achieved in practice.

The report notes that Sheffield is a high spending authority but is by no means extravagant. While some aspects of its spending (pupil costs, adult education and the youth service) are high, others (unit costs in further education, spending on books) are below national norms. Meeting the demands faced by the Authority will require continuing identification of priorities and a focus on . . . cost-effectiveness."

The press release did not say that the inspectors found no evidence of political education being used as a vehicle for indoctrination, but pointed out that it was approached "fairly and openmindedly."

The Government have decided to slash the expenditure levels by about £35 million, of which between £7 million and £8 million must be borne by the education service in Sheffield. HMI has produced a glowing report, which is probably one of the best by that inspectorate, not only

[Mr. Caborn]

about the type of education, but about the effectiveness of spending on that education. Now we must slash that by some £7 million to £8 million.

Let us compare that with the attacks by Conservative Members only a few weeks ago, when my local authority agreed to go into partnership with the private sector on building some 2,000 houses in Sheffield. It was called a novel method, but the private sector was involved, along with the municipal authorities. It was only at the 11th hour that we were able to sign the agreement. At 5 pm one evening we were told that because of the rent arrangements that the local authority had reached with the private financiers, the proposal would be valid only if signed before midnight. The dictatorial attitudes that prevail on the part of Conservative Members have to be seen to be believed. We were able to secure that financial agreement by 11.15 that night, however.

Conservative Members cry out for the capital receipts to be used. Local authorities such as Sheffield want partnerships with the private sector to build houses that are sorely needed, yet because that does not comply with their diktats, the Government even squash such arrangements as well.

Much has been said about the so-called loony Left councils, of which Sheffield is one. Independent reports and HMI reports say that it is the best authority. Even on the so-called misuse of rates, the most recent auditor said that if people look at Sheffield they will see the best use of public money there.

If the Government continue to attack local Government, they will rue the day. Sheffield was criticised by the Government when it proposed an employment plan, which was supported across the community, to produce 25,000 jobs. When such things happen, private Members' Bills are introduced to rubbish such proposals. Everything that local government has stood for in my area of Sheffield, and which has been independently assessed, has turned out extremely well in terms of cost efficiency and the service that is given.

The only thing that we have heard from the Government Benches is carping and moaning about local authorities and proposals that simply put more into the coffers of those who can well afford to provide the finance services themselves. They should be ashamed. We are talking about employment, education and social services in a major area of deprivation. If the Government can oppose such initiatives, it is nothing less than deplorable. It is they who are accelerating the north-south divide by the sectarian policies that they are putting into operation.

8.31 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on Avon): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that the Government had been fomenting inequality. The leader of the Social Democratic party, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), joined in that charge. One would have thought that both right hon. Members would have learnt from their unhappy experience in government in the 1970s that the quest for equality, certainly the equality of outcome, which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook tells us his party believes in, is a process fraught with illusions and ironies.

The Southampton manifesto of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook demonstrates that he has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Therefore, it will be instructive and cast some light on the choice that will have to be made at the general election, between a reversion to Socialism and a continuation of Conservatism, if we pause and recollect momentarily what happened during the last period in which the Labour party, in government, sought to create equality.

The prologue to that drama was spoken by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) in his address to the Labour party conference in 1973, when he said that it was the purpose of his party to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families. But what then happened? Was that speech the launch of a crusade for social justice? Or was it a prelude to a period of government by a party that was inextricably beholden to class and sectional interests and could not resist the temptations of power and ideological self-gratification?

The background to that Labour Government was the oil price rise of 1973. As Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East made one profoundly mistaken and fateful judgment. He decided to boost public spending to offset the deflationary effects of the oil price rise. In 1974-75, public expenditure rose by 12·5 per cent. while public sector borrowing rose to 9 per cent. of GDP, and more subsequently. Ineluctably, inflation also rose, so that by August 1975 inflation was running at 27 per cent. per annum. Then, in a vain and counter-productive attempt to dampen down the inflationary consequences of their financial policies, the Labour Government sought to buy trade union co-operation through the social contract.

Under the social contract, the Industrial Relations Act 1971 was abolished, legal immunities and privileges were heaped upon the trade unions, prices and rents were arbitrarily controlled, food prices were subsidised, vindictive levels of personal taxation were introduced and an expensive programme of nationalisation was embarked upon. The hope was to secure voluntary restraint in pay bargaining on the part of the trade union movement. But of course that restraint was not delivered. By August 1975 wage rises were at 30 per cent. year on year. Lord Barnett, who was Chief Secretary to the Treasury at the time, subsequently wrote:

"The only give and take in the contract was that the Government gave and the unions took."

So it was that the Labour party, in its rhetoric and indeed in its tradition committed to equality and social justice, found itself practising policies of inflation and privilege. It would be the same if a Labour Government were returned to office in future. High inflation then led to injustice and widening inequality. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook rightly said that inflation hits the lowest paid the hardest. At the height of his greatness, the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection in the previous Labour Government. The average rate of price increases in the lifetime of that Government was 15 per cent., so he should know.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: No. We are short of time. I am sorry.

Inflation, as it saps the profitability of companies, ineluctably also leads to that most offensive of inequalities, unemployment. Under the Labour Government, unemployment doubled. Other antagonisms and inequalities were sharpened, too. The great inequality was between

those who were members of trade unions, the privileged members of the big battalions, and the rest. As people elbowed to get hold of the best share they could get of the resources of depreciating money, the toughest grabbed the most, the weakest became unemployed and the pensioners were trampled underfoot.

The rake's progress of our national economy was temporarily halted by the intervention of the International Monetary Fund. But as the Labour Government, for a while, sought to correct what had gone wrong, they found themselves creating inequalities in other ways. It was they, to use their own rhetoric, who embarked upon a "dismantling" of the welfare state. The truly "savage" cuts were those of 1977-78, when capital expenditure in the NHS was reduced by £100 million. Public spending on education fell in the three years after 1976-77, so that by 1979 less was being spent on education than in 1973.

As soon as the bailiffs departed, the rake's progress was resumed, as the Labour Government took the easy but deceptive path of trying to inflate their way out of trouble. Once again borrowing rose, from 3·6 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1977-78 to 5·3 per cent. of GDP in 1978-79. In the winter of 1978-79, which has gone into folk memory as the winter of discontent, the fabric of society was disintegrating fast. Flying pickets roamed the country, patients were denied supplies in hospitals at certain places, and in others the dead were not buried. Mr. Bill Dunn, leader of the striking ambulance men said:

"If it means lives lost, that is how it must be."

It was at that moment that the moral credentials of the Labour movement ran out.

It is an irony too painful for the Labour party to contemplate that the pursuit of equality impoverishes, harshens and divides society. In truth, it merely displaces old inequalities and privileges with new ones. But the Labour party would do it all again. The policy manifesto now set forth by the right hon. Member for Sparkbook is littered with pledges to increase public spending — precise pledges where there is a possibility of buying the votes of a section of the population, otherwise vague pledges. At the same time we are asked to believe that the policies would reduce industrial costs. The right hon. Gentleman proposes a national minimum wage. I can think of no surer formula to increase unemployment. He also proposes a series of new institutions — a British investment bank and regional development agencies.

The right hon. Member for Devonport—who, I was disappointed to learn this afternoon, has not abandoned the politics of jealousy—also littered his speech with a spuriously precise parade of statistics and new institutional devices. Opposition Members would have us believe, and they are trying to persuade the electorate, that simple solutions are available to complex problems, and that quick solutions to social problems are available at no serious cost to the taxpayer, or in terms of borrowing and interest rates. That is the stale, discredited, contradictory litany of the 1970s.

The Conservative party believes in fairness, as opposed to the illusory equality of Socialism. We respect the individual. We believe that the role of the Government is to create a framework of fair opportunities, in which the individual, the family, the business and the community can realise their varied potentialities. We believe in a society in which excellence and effort are honoured, in the benign inequality of leadership, and of achievement which benefits everyone. We believe that success is a contribution, not an exploitation.

As the Government have set out to create that framework of opportunities, they have patiently and gradually stabilised our national finances. We know that one nation cannot be built on inflationary quicksands. Inflation hits the poor and the weak the hardest. It is now at its lowest level for 20 years, and, as a member of the Conservative party, I am proud of that.

We are removing the legal immunities and privileges of the trade unions to secure a fair balance between unions and their members, between unions and management and between unions and society. We are bringing down the punitive rates of personal taxation, which discriminated so inequitably and destructively against people who have a creative contribution to make. Because we abhor unemployment, we are realistically and systematically tackling unemployment at its roots — inflation, the labour market, taxation and deregulation.

Because we want improved public services for all, we are increasing spending on the Health Service, on education and training, on inner cities, on infrastructure, on law and order and on defence.

Our policies are based on realism and humane values, and they are bearing fruit. We are entering our seventh year of economic growth at 3 per cent. per annum. Some 500 additional new businesses have been created every week in the past five years. There are 1 million more jobs than in 1983. Moreover, 65 per cent. of the population who are of working age are in work here, compared with 57 per cent. in Europe. The real take-home pay of a married man on average earnings, with two children, has gone up by 18 per cent. What good does it do to foment resentment and jealousy in that family with the thought that others may have done even better?

The Government are enfranchising the people.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: No, I will not.

We are bringing about trade union democracy, the sale of council homes, wider share ownership, wider pension ownership and extended opportunity for parents to influence education. We are building a culture of responsibility in which people are increasingly willing to take responsibility for their own lives and for each other. The Labour party should understand that they will not tolerate irresponsibility on the part of the Government.

In 1986 we experienced the lowest number of working days lost in 30 years, and the lowest number of strikes in 50 years. The old assumption that there must be a conflict between labour and capital is dead in this country. The modern electorate finds Labour's programme frankly reactionary. The rhetoric of division, sour comparison and jealous resentment is repellent to a people who have discovered a better equality in renewed national self-respect and a pride in independence and success.

The Government are intelligently, decently and bravely pursuing the complex task of advancing economic prosperity, improving social welfare, extending the freedom of our citizens and nurturing the integrity of our nation. When the general election comes, the voters will not wish it otherwise.

8.44 pm

Mr. Mathew Taylor (Truro): The theme of tonight's debate has been that our society needs to be a fair one that gives everyone equal rights and rewards, and in which responsibility and power are shared out evenly and widely. I wish to take the opportunity to correct an error that I have heard constantly in the debate. There has not been much progression in the debate, but perhaps we can get at least one point across.

It is not simply a north-south divide. It is a divide between the rich and the poor, between the privileged and the under-privileged. The Government are doing nothing to tackle that divide. Only the alliance can make the bridge across every sector of the country, as can be seen by the wide distribution of our support.

We hear so much about the north-south divide. It is only a few months since it was front-page news that the Labour party's £6 billion reflationary package would be sent to the north. I am not from the north. I represent a rural constituency in the south-west, but our problems are much like those anywhere else. They are the problems of the inner city, but they are also those of rurally deprived areas and of many individuals in all sorts of areas. They are the problems of the poor, the old, the young and the long-term unemployed, almost wherever they live.

A feature of the south-west is that it combines a low wage area with a traditional seat of the rich and powerful. A recent report by the Child Poverty Action group, entitled "Poverty and Deprivation in the South West", makes the point very tellingly. On pay, it states that the south-west has

"The highest percentage of full-time male employees earning less than £100 per week"

in mainland Britain. At the same time, it has

"The highest percentage (except for the South East) of households with incomes over £350 per week."

On housing, it states that the area has

"The lowest percentage of council houses."

Yet it has

"The highest . . . average new dwelling price."

That is in an area where many people are homeless.

On health, the report states that the south-west has

"The lowest (female) age-adjusted mortality rates and the second lowest (male) age-adjusted mortality rates"

But it has

"The highest percentage of the population . . . insured for private medical treatment."

On education, the report states that the area has

"The highest pupil-teacher ratio in both state primary and state secondary schools."

Yet it has

"The lowest pupil-teaching ratio in private (non-maintained) schools."

That is the record in the south-west. The poverty and deprivation about which we have heard are present with us too.

We have the problems of the inner cities — for instance, in the St. Paul's district of Bristol. We have the problems of industrial decline in such areas as Plymouth, and particularly the problems of a declining semi-industrialised area full or rural poverty. I see that in my area, Cornwall.

In the past few weeks, in my case work—I do not deny that I have not been doing it for long—I have seen a range of the problems that are brought to most Members of Parliament. One lady's council house is so damp that in the two weeks during which the council lent her a dehumidifier—it then had to take it to another house elsewhere—23 pints of water were extracted from the walls. Because of the Goverment spending cuts on housing and the rate capping of local authority expenditure on housing, homeless people are offered the choice between nothing at all and a damp, cold caravan in the middle of winter, from which many people had to be moved into church halls when it snowed.

Children are in portakabin classrooms that are so dangerous when the wind gets up that they have to stay at home. People in their 20s who have never had a job are coming to me in the last, desperate hope that I, as their new Member of Parliament, will be able to find work for them. Companies are pulling out of Truro and St. Austell. They were attracted there by grants a few years ago, but those grants are no longer available.

Rural poverty is marked, as is other poverty, by low pay and inadequate benefits. In 1985 average gross earnings for Cornish people in full-time employment were just under £160 for men and £110 for women—about 20 per cent. lower than the national average—making it the lowest paid county for men on the mainland and the second lowest paid county for women.

That is exacerbated by regional variations in educational provision, which might provide the means for people to overcome their difficulties. At its lowest level it would enable women to go to work, and it would also provide children with an early introduction to schooling. Yet Cornwall has only 1·5 day nursery places per 1,000 children under the age of five. It is the lowest county rate for England, Wales or Scotland.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House which party controls the county council in Cornwall?

Mr. Taylor: There is no overall control of the county of Cornwall, although that might change in the near future.

Despite the resource allocation working party, in 1984-85 the south-west was 4 per cent. below the Government's health target. Only Trent and Wessex were worse off. In Cornwall unskilled people will probably die before retirement age at twice the rate for professional people. This Government have spent more on health but they have consistently not provided the funds to meet the growing need. That is why the alliance has today launched a health package that guarantees that provision will be made to meet the growing calls on the NHS. It will also create a special innovation fund to tackle regional imbalances and difficulties.

If Conservative Members do not agree with what we say about health, they should read the Health Education Council's report "The Health Divide", particularly the introduction by its director general, who has now been sacked. He says:

"Such inequality is inexcusable in a democratic society which prides itself on being humane. To eliminate or even reduce it substantially would be a major contribution to the health of the people of this country."

"The Health Divide" contains statistics that prove what the Opposition parties have been saying for years: that Britain is becoming increasingly a more unequal society under this Government.

The alliance has led the opposition in this Parliament to the abolition of the Health Education Council. The alliance—alone, so far as I am aware, at present—is pledged to reconstituting an independent health authority body, free from Government control. I am afraid that

there must be substantial doubt about whether, in the absence of the recreation of that independent body, we can expect the new Health Education Authority to publish a follow-up document to "The Health Divide".

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) referred to the increasing number of patients who have been squeezed through National Health Service hospitals. He seemed to measure efficiency of treatment in the same way as factories are measured. It was one of the most inhumane statements that I have heard since I became a Member of Parliament. It means that patients are pushed out of beds before they are ready to leave hospital. This happens in hospitals in my constituency. We on this side of the House believe in a caring National Health Service. It should not be measured as though it were an inhumane machine—as a factory that spits out patients in the same way as matchsticks are spat out of a matchstick factory.

As for housing, between 1981 and 1986 the number of homeless households accepted by the Plymouth city council—a rapidly growing town in the south-west—increased by 29·3 per cent. In the same period there was a net loss of 2,083 council houses in the city because sales were exceeding new building. Furthermore, council house receipts have been tied up by this Government. An ever-increasing number of homeless people are now competing for an ever-dwindling council housing stock. Costs in Cornwall are forced up even more, because increasingly the limited housing stock is becoming the property of those who own second homes. The number of unoccupied second residencies has already reached 11 per cent. in certain parts of the county. In other parts of the county, one in six of the houses that are bought are being used as second homes.

Mr. Lilley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: No, I must draw my speech to a close. I am afraid that I am running out of time.

In his recent Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer had £6 billion to spend or give away. Rather than invest that money in the policies that are contained in our policy documents, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) referred, he chose to line the pockets of those who are already in better paid employment. But that tactic for gaining votes has not worked. The reason is simple. The people of this country—whether in Truro or St. Austell, whether in the south-west or in the north, whether they are rich or poor—can see that this Government are mortgaging the short-term revenues from privatisation and North sea oil for a quick votes grab.

Almost everybody in my area, and increasingly almost everybody in this nation, knows somebody who cannot find work. It may be that their children cannot find work, or that their parents cannot survive on an inadequate pension, or that they themselves cannot obtain hospital treatment inside a year and therefore are forced to pay for it privately, if they have the money with which to do so. All of them are finding that they are losing more than they have gained from this Government's policies.

By means of genuine decentralisation—giving people money with which to take control over their own lives and giving local people the backing that they need, in partnership with the private sector to move forward—we can reinvest in this country's future. We are at a turning point. We can continue in our decline, continue to mortgage our future and allow the Health Service to crumble, and the sewerage system and roads to fall apart until we cannot afford to do anything about it, or we can act now, invest and take our country forward while we are able to do so. That is what the alliance is proposing to do.

9.2 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I should like to emphasise a point that has been made more often by Conservative Members than by others, which is that there is not really a north-south divide in the sense in which it is generally put over by the Opposition parties. It is patchy and it would be better described in the round as being between inner-city areas and the residential and suburban areas throughout the country. Having said that, it is important to draw attention to those areas where there is heavy industrial production. I particularly mention my constituency of Stafford.

In Stafford we have no grants to speak of and we have a relatively low unemployment rate of about 8·5 per cent. We are in the centre of the midlands between Telford, which is an enterprise zone, a prospective urban development agency to the south, and Stoke-on-Trent which receives a huge amount of Government rate support. Staffordshire as a whole receives the fourth highest amount of rate support of all the counties in England and Wales. We do not have many of the advantages of other industrial areas but Stafford is remarkably enterprising and successful in comparison with the rest of the country.

I should like to illustrate a point that has not been made clearly during the debate. Rather than people talking about going from the north or the midlands to the south, I suggest that they should think seriously about coming from the south to the midlands. Of course, I should like them to come to my constituency. I say that because recently GEC closed down a works on the south coast for good sound commercial reasons and came up to Stafford. It found it particularly attractive to come to Stafford not only because it is a marvellous place but because the cost of living was markedly lower than where it came from.

Reward Regional Surveys, situated in Stone on the borders of my constituency, is a nationally reputable body which produces surveys for the benefit of the Government and other statutory authorities. It has shown that if one compared the amount spent by each income group, for example in the west midlands, and compared that with London commuters one would find that in the lowest group, group A, the London commuter requires £10,901 to achieve a standard of living that covers food, drink, tobacco, durable goods, other goods, services, fuel, transport, clothing, housing, savings, pensions and tax. In the west midlands the average requirement is £8,781 but in Stafford the average requirement is £7,630. My point is that with regard to the average within the regions, it is £1,000 cheaper a year to live in Stafford, which is a highly prosperous area, than it is to live in other parts of the west midlands and it is some £3,000 a year cheaper than it is to live in London.

We are moving into a new era of speed of communication, new industries and new enterprises. I have just helped to form, and have raised £23,500 for, an enterprise agency in Stafford. When one has such enterprise and initiative in an area and it is well based, traditionally and historically, on industries and good

[Mr. William Cash]

commerce, it is attractive for people to come to live there. Much of the moaning and groaning that we hear from other areas is based on a pessimistic approach to their local economy.

On 26 March, in *The Times*, there was an article by Mr. Rodney Lord, in which he made it clear that there is a patchwork of areas within the country as a whole. Furthermore, these areas are extremely localised and one gets the greatest differential between concentrations of unemployment between different housing estates, not necessarily regionally. It happens within towns and cities.

The west midlands area is getting better. The economy is improving. Stafford is a prime example of an area that is getting more and more prosperous and that recently was rated the 53rd most prosperous place in Britain—despite the fact that it has a significant amount of heavy engineering—with a strong and effective work force.

9.5 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I represent a constituency with the fifth lowest unemployment in the country, but I speak as somebody who spent 15 years working in Brixton, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. I shall refer to the inequalities and deprivation about which I learned during those 15 years.

There were inequalities between those who could and those who could not own their homes. There were inequalities that meant that anyone who had a rise in income had to leave, because he did not have the chance of buying his own house. There were those of parents who were unable to have any say or standing in their children's school and who were powerless and impotent while their children were taught meaningless racism and sexism rather than being prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow. There were inequalities of pensioners without independent pensions and of individuals who had no stake in their own firm. Now I can speak after several years of Conservative Government, which have resulted in one in five of our adults being individual shareholders, of many nationalised industries being privatised and many employees being able to buy shares in their companies.

Of course we all deplore the difficulties and disadvantages faced by those who live in areas of high unemployment. The situation is different in London, where within a close distance there are firms with jobs and organisations such as Sight and Sound offering high quality training places but who are unable to fill their vacancies, while in the areas referred to by some hon. Members, the prospects of employment are clearly much more remote.

I also speak as a representative of a county that, through rate support grant and RAWP, is well aware of the many Government policies that may lead to less advantage to areas such as mine so that more resources can go to the north. The Manpower Services Commission spent £3 billion on special employment measures last year and is now regarded as the leader in European terms in providing training opportunities for the unemployed. It spent three times per head on individuals in the northern region what it spent on individuals in the south-east. That is right and proper, but to hear some hon. Members speaking this evening, one would have thought that the opposite was the case.

Above all, I speak for those young people who, for many years, have been leaving school at 16 because they were not academically minded, but for whom nothing has been provided. Now, we have a two-year youth training scheme, offering a real training opportunity——

Mr. Rogers: And no job.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to make that cheap jibe. Remarks such as his do great damage to many young people in inner-city areas. The denigration of opportunities through cynicism, apathy and lethargy has exacerbated their difficulties.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: No, I shall follow the example of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) of not taking any interruptions, but not for the same reason; I am sorry.

Too often, the education and job opportunity failures in inner cities are caused by low expectations. Remarks such as that by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and others denigrating the opportunities that are available, do so much damage.

We now have job training schemes offering vocational training to prepare our young and older people for the jobs needed today and in the future. Last week, we had the White Paper on higher education showing that, by the end of the century, one in five of our school leavers should go on to higher education at 18. The young are our seedcorn. By the end of the century, about 70 per cent. of all jobs will require further qualifications and brainpower rather than muscle power. It is by realistic investment in the necessary training for the future that so much has been achieved.

The other great inequality faced in the past was that between the lower income person at work and the low income individual on benefit. The Government have done more than any other to redress that imbalance. The point about the maternity grant or the funeral grant is that they will now at last be available to low-income people in work. The family credit will be extended to more families and available at better rates giving greater acknowledgement to adolescent children. That will help to redress a very unfair inequality that has been present for far too long.

Populist gimmicks, such as free television licences for all pensioners, have no place in the policies that I believe should be used to redress inequalities. When it comes to proper investment in the Health Service and the education services and realistic training and employment measures, we have a great deal of which to be proud. The inequalities in this country are rather less than the regional inequalities in France and Germany. They are very much less than the regional inequalities in the Netherlands and Italy. I believe that the Government are rightly and properly addressing themselves to meeting the needs of regions that face disadvantage without resorting to the profligate indiscriminate policies that only result in higher inflation and, in the long run, to fewer opportunities and fewer real jobs.

9.10 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It is always a pleasure to follow the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). She is very much the——

Mr. Lilley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of us have been here throughout the debate. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has only just popped in.

Mr. Banks: That was hardly a point of order. I have been sitting in the Chamber for some time. When I was not present, I was attending a Select Committee upstairs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must not challenge in any way the absolute discretion of the Chair as to who should be called.

Mr. Banks: I now have four minutes left.

Before I was very rudely interrupted, I was saying that it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West because she is very much the acceptable face of Tory extremism today. I agree with her in one respect —when she said that there is a low level of expectation in our inner cities. I have found that among the many poverties that we face in the borough that I have the privilege to represent — Newham in the east end of London — the greatest poverty is the poverty of expectation. They actually expect bugger-all and that is usually about what they receive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not inflict such coarse expressions on the House again.

Mr. Banks: I am frightfully sorry. I realise what a delicate lot we all are here.

The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) made the sort of hustings speech that no doubt his constituents and the electors in the area will hear interminably in the weeks to come. He spelt out what he said was a success story. I find it very difficult to understand how anyone in their right mind could claim that we have an economic success story on our hands. Unemployment is up 300 per cent. since 1979 and that costs £20 billion a year. We have the highest level of unemployment among the seven main industrial countries. Manufacturing output is 6 per cent. lower than in 1979. Manufacturing investment is 24 per cent. down on the 1979 figure. There was a deficit of £5·4 billion in the balance of payments in manufactured goods in 1986, and that contrasts with a surplus in 1980 of £5 billion. Last year, the overall balance of payments deficit was £1·1 billion. That must be contrasted with the receipts of about £50 billion in North sea oil over the same period.

Conservative members have said that we now have more money to spend. Yes, that may be so for some people. However, they are the richest people in society. The average family in this country is paying more tax now and will pay more tax than in 1979. We have the highest interest rates in Europe and the highest inflation rate among our major competitors.

Frankly, if that is a success story, then God save us from failure. A third-rate Government are reducing us to a second-rate country. We are fast becomong a banana monarchy without even having the benefits of bananas. That is the present position. I really do not know how some hon. Members can claim that that is a wonderful success story. Those hon. Members should come to Newham and tell the 18,000 people on the dole that this is a great success story. Let them come to Newham and tell the 33,000 people receiving supplementary benefit that this is a great success story. No doubt those people will tell Tory Members what it really is.

Conservative Members do not know what it is like to be at the bottom end of society. They do not have the faintest idea and they do not care. The Government are evil, wicked and divisive. The sooner we get rid of them, the better it will be for the country.

9.15 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): We have had, not least in the last few moments, a fascinating if somewhat tangential, debate. The Paymaster General in his usual rechauffé Cambridge Union knockabout which passes for a speech, talked about everything except poverty and inequality.

With, no doubt, an eye to the election, the Paymaster General made a great deal of what he called the Government's fine record of economic growth, which he claimed would overcome inequalities and promote one nation. If that growth is so good, why are class divisions deeper today than at any time in our recent history?

In fact, the Government's growth record is not so good. It only started in 1982, and the Prime Minister sometimes talks as though she prefers to forget that she came to power in 1979. When the awful years of 1980 and 1981 are included, growth has been only 1·4 per cent. a year under this Government, which is well below the rate of our main competitors.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) used the debate to launch the fourth version of the SDP-Liberal social security plan. That was not surprising because the first three were successively sunk, as one anomaly after another was revealed.

The right hon. Gentleman has not faced up to the fact that the central flaw in the selectivity that he now favours is that it requires yet more means testing, which always produces low take-up, and that inefficient delivery defeats the whole purpose of the excerise.

The right hon. Gentleman has not answered some key questions. How are the 2 million pensioners who would receive a higher pension increase to be selected, when means testing always causes low take-up among the elderly? Is it not a £1 increase in child benefit rather minor? Is it only one third of what the Labour party proposes. Is it not astonishing that someone seeking to launch a political party's social security programme did not seem to understand that the key fact about child benefit is that it is paid to all families with children, whether those families are in or out of work, so that, uniquely, it does not worsen the poverty trap? That is why a mere £1 increase is so feeble.

Why is the SDP's basic benefit any better than the supplementary benefit and family income supplement which it would replace, if it is to be means tested and have a tapered withdrawal of benefit as income rises, which will still aggravate the poverty trap?

Is it not clear that the SDP proposal for an £8 or £11 per week benefit for the long-term childless unemployed is greatly inferior to the Labour party's initiative for a £12 increase in benefit for all long-term unemployed and not just the childless?

Instead of any serious integrated reform of tax and benefits, we heard nothing about tax, but simply a muddled melee of increased means testing, which, at a cost of £2 billion, offers some of the worst value for money of any scheme that I have seen recently.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: It is interesting that the Tory party wishes to defend the SDP.

Mr. Fowler: Would not the hon. Gentleman's condemnation of the SDP carry a little more weight if he had not promised as long as two years ago to produce his own plans on supplementary benefit and the reform of social security? He has made successive promises that he is about to publish those plans. When will he publish them?

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State has made a typically silly response. He knows perfectly well that the plan was reported publicly on 18 September. It is called "Social Security and Taxation" and is about both matters. It sets out a much better integration of the two than does the SDP plan, and if the Secretary of State does not have a copy I shall be glad to send him one. The right hon. Gentleman could learn a lot about social security from reading what we say.

This debate is about the other Britain. Over the last eight years Tory policy has repeatedly and obsessively emphasised the rolling back of the frontiers of the state and the untrammelled play of free market forces. It has done so at a price and in a manner which has laid waste large tracts of Britain and devastated large sections of the population. In the name of incentives the Government have not only tolerated inequalities but set about widening them with aggressive relish. The recent Budget was only the latest manifestation of those values.

The Bow Group ideal of one nation has vanished into history like a faded dream. Under this Prime Minister we have had, successively, three-nation Budgets — with nothing for the unemployed and pensioners, peanuts for the low-paid and a bonanza for the already prosperous and well-heeled. For the first time for half a century there is a swelling under-class of the dispossessed. Today there are 6 million people in the families of those who have been unemployed for more than half a year. There are a further 6 million who are low paid—they are paid below the minimum decency standard set by the Council of Europe. Another 5 million are pensioners living on supplementary benefit or have such exiguous incomes above the state subsistence line as to be permanently confined on the margins of poverty.

That is a total of 17 million people—one third of the population, an army of the impoverished, which has more than doubled since 1979. Under the lead of this Prime Minister the numbers of long-term unemployed have quadrupled. According to a consistent standard, the numbers of low-paid workers have nearly doubled, and for the first time pensioners have been hammered in large numbers by housing benefit cuts.

What is so harsh about this philosophy, and what is surely at the heart of the debate, is that under this Government success is all too often bought at the price of the disadvantage of others. Under this Prime Minister's scheme of things one man's incentive has become another's property trap. Large-scale tax relief measures in successive annual Budgets have concentrated on the richest in the population and been funded by equally large benefit cuts in successive social security Bills, which have been concentrated heavily on the poorest. Worse—we now know from the Health Education Council's report, "The Health Divide", which the Government did their best to suppress, that it is one thing to increase incentives for the successful, but it is quite another to penalise the victims of unemployment and poverty with higher morbidity and even premature death.

It is the morality of such a system which is so striking. How can the doubling of the numbers who live in poverty since 1979 to more than 10 million be justified while at the same time tax cuts are handed out to members of the Cabinet and those on £50,000 a year? Those tax cuts are now worth an extra £245 a week. How can it be justified, in the same year, to pay pensioners an extra 40p a week, while the Top Salaries Review Body awards top judges, civil servants and the military an extra £40 a week, and when the big bang is dishing out to young Tory acolytes in the City salaries which read more like telephone directory numbers?

How can it be justified to offer the Prime Minister, who is buying a £500,000 mansion in Dulwich, an extra £35 a week in mortgage tax relief, when two months ago the same Government cut by half the mortgage payments to those on supplementary benefit who were unfortunate enough to be struggling to buy a house at the time that they became unemployed? That is bound to lead to widespread evictions and homelessness.

How can it be justified to cut benefit for 80,000 young people through the iniquitous board-and-lodging regulations and to move them on from town to town every two, four or eight weeks in search of jobs that do not exist when, a week ago, Morgan Grenfell, the merchant bank disgraced by involvement in shady share dealings with Guinness, awarded the two top managers responsible £562,000 for walking through the door?

Underlying the Thatcherite market system is a particularly cynical piece of real politics, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred—the high paid will not work unless they are given incentives; the low paid will not work unless they are penalised. The new general managers in the National Health Service require a bonus of £60 a week on top of £30,000 a year before they will give of their best while the ancillaries—the hospital cleaners and laundry workers—on £60 a week in total have to have their wages and hours cut by privatisation before they can be made efficient.

It is the sheer indifference towards what the Tory party no doubt in its heart despises as the helot class which to me is so ugly and harsh. One has to ask what right the Government have to force 10 million of our fellow citizens to live in poverty for years on end at a subsistence standard that one of them could not get by on even until the end of one week. One might ask also what right the Government have to keep forcing down even lower some of the lowest wages when Lord Gowrie resigned as Minister of State because he could not make ends meet on £33,000 a year — no doubt the most celebrated victim yet of the Government's low-pay policy.

Above all, the central lesson is that this degree of inequality, this magnitude in the rise of poverty, is not an accident. It is not an inevitable result of economic expansion or a by-product of technological change. It is deliberately engineered on a scale unprecedented since the 1930s.

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: Even I was stunned when I learned, in answer to a question which I tabled two months ago, that

top directors and executives in the biggest companies on more than £70,000 a year had each received tax handouts since 1979 worth an average £19,100 a year. At £370 a week extra in tax cuts, that is nearly three times the total weekly earnings after tax and national insurance of the average single man.

It is not only tax cuts. Even more significant has been the spread of share option schemes among top earners. Under such a scheme, approved two months ago at Burton, 80 senior executives could be eligible for options worth up to eight times their total remuneration. Given that Burton's recently notorious chairman and chief executive was paid, or rather paid himself, £1 million a year, the embarrassed board, under pressure from shareholders, thought that decency dictated that he should receive a modest £2·5 million extra.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman will learn a lot more by listening than by intervening.

For the privileged few, the Thatcherite regime has been a Croesus-like licence to print money. For such persons, this is not the Government of Adam Smith and the "invisible hand". This is the Government of Ivan Boesky —one can be greedy and still feel good about oneself. Who is holding the nation to ransom now? Not for a long time has the politics of greed and selfishness been so triumphantly in the ascendant.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I shall not give way.

Such things must be paid for. They are being paid for, largely by the pensioners. Each year the Government have increased the pension only in line with prices, not with earnings. Because of that, cumulatively over the last seven years they have done the pensioners out of more than £11 billion that they would have had under Labour's formula. In the course of the next year alone pensioners will lose £3·5 billion a year compared to what they would have had under Labour's formula.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: In order to assist the hon. Lady, who I am sure wants to know about this, I shall put it in terms of the individual pensioner. Over the years since 1979, a single pensioner has lost £9·90. Between 1974 and 1979, the pension increased by 20 per cent. in real terms. Those were five Labour years. In eight Tory years the pension has increased in real terms by only 2·5 per cent.—only one eighth as much. So much for the Chancellor's £2·5 billion give-away Budget of three weeks ago. It was some give-away. It has been paid for, and more, by the pensioner. Every penny of those extra tax reliefs is money that morally at least belongs to the pensioners.

There is not only the pension cheat; there is the housing benefit fiddle. Just as the Government have not reduced tax for 95 per cent. of the population, because they put up insurance contributions and VAT by more, so they have not increased pensions for hundreds of thousands of pensioners because housing benefit has been cut by more than the pension has been increased. Today the pension is going up by 80p, but over 3 million pensioners are suffering cuts in housing benefit, including 1 million pensioners who will lose more than 80p.

The date of 6 April is significant for another reason in the context of Britain's growing social and economic inequalities. It is the one-year pre-anniversary of the coming into force of the Fowler Social Security Act. That day one year hence will see the beginning of further benefit cuts amounting to another £1 billion. On that day pensioners will face further and even bigger housing benefit cuts of nearly £500 million. Those are all Government figures. On that day the 10 million people on supplementary benefit will be subjected to the tender mercies of the social fund which, for the first time, will cash-limit the relief of poverty. By forcing people to repay loans out of future supplementary benefit payments, it will drive the hardest hit in our society deeper into poverty and debt.

There could not be a more ignominious illustration than the Fowler Social Security Act that is soon to come into operation — no doubt after the election — of the Government's determination to squeeze the poor until the pips squeak. Perhaps I could change the metaphor. The trickle-down theory has been replaced by the trickle-up effect on an unprecedented scale.

Widening inequalities is one thing. Generating ill health, or even premature death, is quite another. The explosive connection between these two things led to the Government going to such extraordinary lengths to suppress publication of the Health Education Council's devastating indictment called "The Health Divide". All that the Government achieved was unerringly to demonstrate their guilt just as they have done on many similar occasions. Seven years ago they tried to suppress the Black report by refusing to publish the docment and by publishing only a limited number of cyclostyled typescripts. Last July, on a Friday after the House had risen for the summer recess, they published the poverty figures. They were three years out of date, but they still showed a near doubling of poverty since 1979.

The publication of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report, "Occupational Mortality", was held back in July until hon. Members were safely out of Westminster. Even then a crucial section was missing from the main text. The key analysis of social class and health was relegated to the dark recesses of the microfiche table accompanying the report. The excuse given was technical difficulties, but the reality is that the Government wished to draw a veil over the worsening social conditions. At least the Government have a guilty conscience—some of us had begun to doubt it—but covering up the truth solves nothing. If the Prime Minister is so enamoured of Mr. Gorbachev and his new methods, let us have a little more glasnost in this country as regards uncomfortable facts.

The evidence is overwhelming. Dr. McDowell, formerly of the OPCS, showed in a recent article in *The Lancet* that, despite a fall in overall mortality, health inequalities between manual and non-manual workers had recently widened for all causes of death. The article concludes that worsening unemployment and income inequalities are mainly responsible. The Townsend study "Inequalities in Health in the Northern Region" published last year found that wards with poorer health profiles closely mirrored those with high material deprivation.

Now we have the HEC report which has reached clearly authoritative and damning conclusions. It notes that for diseases of poverty, such as cancer of the cervix and tuberculosis, there is no evidence of any reduction in class differentials in the past eight years. Indeed, it states:

[Mr. Meacher]

"in some respects the health of the lower occupational classes has actually deteriorated against a background of general improvement in the population."

It further states — the Government have repeatedly denied this—that

"there is substantial evidence of unemployment causing a deterioration in mental health."

It also highlights the north-south poverty divide by pointing out the sharp national and regional disparities in health. Death rates in the 1980s were highest in Scotland, next highest in the northern and north-western regions of England and lowest in the south-east and in East Anglia.

No doubt that authoritative statement of the major role of unemployment, low pay and poverty in causing ill health and even premature death will be dismissed in some quarters. It will no doubt be dismissed by the junior Health Minister who likes to admonish northerners to stop eating pie and chips and to start eating paté and avocado pears and who wishes to make individuals responsible for society's inequalities. No doubt it will be dismissed by the kind of people who, when Archbishop Romero fed the hungry, described him as a saint, but when he asked why they were hungry described him as a Marxist. The Archbishop of Canterbury's commission on "Faith in the City" has already been called Marxist. No doubt it is just a matter of time before "The Health Divide" and the BMA, which supports it, are described as Marxist by the chairman of the Tory party. In fact, only the hard-line Right who dominate the present Government fail to see the connection between worsening health and the Government's ending of free school meals, doubling of poverty, tripling of homelessness, halving of regional grants, major cuts in rate support grant, decimation of the housing programme and virtual abandonment of housing repairs.

No doubt there will be no decisive action from the Government on poverty, low pay, unemployment or health inequalities because those issues simply do not rate a high priority with the Prime Minister. The House will pardon me if her attitude reminds me of Tacitus's summary of Roman militarism, "Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant."

Mr. Tony Banks: Hear, hear.

Mr. Meacher: I am glad to note that my hon. Friends understand Latin well. In translation, the quotation means, "They produce a wasteland and call it peace." That will be the Prime Minister's memorial. In 1979 she said that where there was discord she would bring peace, but where there was agreement she has brought conflict and confrontation endlessly. So far from healing the wounds in the interests of one nation, she has aggressively and ruthlessly pursued class divisions. Neither she, nor her party, is worthy to remain the Government of this country.

9.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): I want to say immediately that the allegation and charge made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that the Government sought to suppress the HEC report is wholly untrue and completely without foundation.

Before we accept lessons from the hon. Gentleman on social policy, the House might care to remember exactly what he and the Labour Government achieved in office. The hon. Gentleman was a Minister at the DHSS between 1975 and late April 1976. At that time, inflation averaged almost 25 per cent., and rose to its post-war record of 26·9 per cent. That was the hon. Gentleman's achievement.

The Christmas bonus for pensioners was suspended for the first time at Christmas 1975; and when the hon. Gentleman refers to pensioners and to today's uprating, I ask him to cast his mind back. The method of uprating pensions was changed at the uprating in 1976. As a result, there was a 6 per cent. cut in benefits for pensioners and for other beneficiaries. The cost of that cut, which was made by the last Labour Government, was—in current values — £1·2 billion. That is what the Labour Government did in power. The hon. Gentleman and his right hon. Friend have a great deal about which to be modest in their record on social policy in Government, and I shall refer again to that in a moment.

Two points are certain as a result of this debate. First, any incoming Labour Government would want to increase taxation, and that increase in taxation would affect millions of people in this country on middle and low incomes. The only question is by how much. Secondly, they say that they would increase public expenditure on the assumption that there would be an automatic increase in public services and improvement in the standard of living of groups such as the elderly in our society.

Let us take that claim about the improvement in public services and apply it to the Health Service. Of course, we are in a position to judge and test such claims by comparing the performance of the Health Service under the Labour Government with performance under this Government. As it happens, we have today published a report by the statistical section of the DHSS and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys which describes hospital activity between 1974 and 1984. And what does that report show?

The figures show beyond doubt that health care has been improving much more quickly over the period of this Government than in the previous period. The best measure of treatment provided by the Health Service is the number of cases treated. The numbers of cases treated in the acute sector of NHS hospitals rose by 0·9 per cent. a year between 1974 and 1978. Between 1980 and 1984 that increase averaged 2·1 per cent. a year. If the year 1979 —which included the winter of discontent—is included in the figures, the comparison is even more stark. The position is that under this Government patient care has improved at between two and three times the rate achieved by the last Labour Government.

During the period, there has been a massive increase in care for elderly people. Since 1979, there has been a 37 per cent. increase in the number of over-75s treated. There were 16,000 more cataract operations, 17,000 more operations on the heart and circulatory system, and 14,000 more joint replacements—a 35 per cent. increase. The report shows a picture of a rapidly developing hospital service with more health care being provided than ever before.

When the hon. Member for Oldham, West talks of waiting lists, let me say this: waiting lists are substantially below the lists left by the Labour Government, when no fewer than 750,000 people were waiting, while during the next 12 months a further 100,000 people will be given operations as a result of the waiting list initiative that I announced earlier this year. Above, all let us remember

that what adds to waiting lists is industrial action. What added to the waiting lists in 1982 was industrial action which the Labour party did nothing to dissuade or condemn.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Tell us about nurses' pay.

Mr. Fowler: I should be glad to do so. Since 1979, nurses' pay has increased by 23 per cent. in real terms. That contrasts with a fall of 21 per cent. under the Labour Government.

Labour Members talk about pensioners and their living standards. What is most extraordinary in their case is their total failure to see the impact of high inflation upon the living standards of pensioners in the middle and late 1970s. The inflation presided over by the Labour Government had not only disastrous effects on industry and business; it had a devasting social impact. It affected those who were least able to protect their interests — especially pensioners, who saw the value of their savings eroded.

The hon. Gentleman gave some partial figures about pensioners' living standards. I shall give the figures from the 1985 family expenditure survey. The facts are that during the Labour Government's period of office from 1974 to 1979, they increased the basic pension in real terms. But their disastrous economic policies wrecked pensioners' other sources of income—their savings and the value of their occupational pensions. Between 1974 and 1979, pensioners' total average net incomes increased by a mere 0·6 per cent. a year. Their income from savings fell steadily by 16 per cent. in real terms. Between 1979 and 1985, pensioners' total incomes increased by 2·7 per cent. a year in real terms—four and a half times as fast as under Labour and more than twice as fast as the growth in incomes of the population as a whole. Income from savings increased by no less than 52 per cent. during the same period.

Those figures show the reality of what has happened to pensoners' incomes under this Government. The half of pensioners' incomes provided by retirement pension has been guaranteed by our policy. But, unlike Labour, we have not neglected the other half of their incomes. We have seen greater occupational pensions—on average, worth roughly the same amount at the state basic pension to those who receive them. We have seen a huge growth in real incomes from savings, and we have seen more pensioners receiving both additional types of income. Now 83 per cent. of newly retired couples have income from savings, compared with only 61 per cent. in 1974. 70 per cent. have occupational pensions, compared with only 52 per cent. in 1974. Because those changes benefit pensioners at all income levels, only a quarter of pensioners are now in the lowest income group in population, compared with 38 per cent. in 1979.

Mr. Meacher: How can the Secretary of State seek to take credit for an increase in pensioners' incomes when it comes about largely from SERPS, which he has done his best to undermine and destroy, and also from occupational pension schemes, which he is doing his best to undermine by personal pensions?

Mr. Fowler: That just establishes finally and conclusively for the House that the hon. Gentleman simply does not understand the position. What the hon. Gentleman said is completely silly, untrue, without foundation and completely in character.

The divisions are not increasing; they are being reduced. More people are getting independence in retirement. What they want is a Government who encourage that and who are able to control inflation.

A few weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition claimed that Britain's pensioners were the poor relations of Europe. Again, that is simply not true. This country spends more as a proportion of its gross domestic product on the support of the elderly than any other European Community country except Denmark and perhaps France. Those figures come from the European Statistical Office, and are on the best basis of comparison possible between different countries and different systems. They tell a completely different tale from the charge by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Pensioners are only part of the story. Some of the accusations that we have heard today about cuts and savings in social security benefits are, frankly, ludicrous. Total spending on social security benefits has risen under the Government——

Mr. Meacher: As a result of higher unemployment.

Mr. Fowler: I shall come to precisely that point.

Total spending on social security benefits has risen from £16 billion to over £44 billion. The benefit uprating, which takes place today, will alone add £700 million to the bill. Even after allowing for inflation, there has been a real-terms increase of over 40 per cent., or £13 billion in current terms.

Let me give the breakdown of that £13 billion. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and the hon. Member for Oldham, West suggested that the increase in spending was due simply to larger numbers of unemployed people. No more than one third of that increase—just over £4 billion — is due to that factor, although I make no apology for that support going to the unemployed. But the main single reason for the higher spending is the real increases in the amounts of benefits paid. That accounts for some 45 per cent. of the total increase. Spending on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled has grown by £2·5 billion. Spending on benefits for the elderly and on low-income working families has also risen.

But the Government have done more than just devote more resources to social security. We have recognised the challenges posed by an outdated and cumbersome social security system, and have directly faced those challenges. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) recognised that in his speech, although we shall have to cost carefully the forecasts that he made of his system. We are not that confident of his predictions at the moment.

The debate has raised important issues, but the real questions that it raises are about not words but the actions and performance of Opposition Members when in government. They talk about the future of children, but what sort of future would our children have had in the country left by the previous Labour Government? The Opposition talk about the interests of the elderly, but what sort of life did elderly people have with the inflation experienced under that Labour Government? The Opposition talk about the Health Service. Indeed, they are putting up posters accusing the Government of achieving "Less staff", "Less beds" and "Less hospitals".

Let us take them in turn. Overall, there has been a reduction in staff since 1982—although not on the 1979

[Mr. Fowler]

figures—and the decrease was, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General said, in support and ancillary staff. At the same time, the front-line staff have increased. There are now 51,000 more nurses and midwives, 5,500 more hospital doctors and dentists and 6,000 more family doctors and dentists. We are running an effective health service with more staff devoted to direct patient care.

The Opposition claim that there are "less beds". The total number of beds fell by about the same number in 1974-79 and in 1979-85, although the loss of acute beds was greater under the last Labour Government. However, doctors do not treat beds; they treat patients, and here the figures are absolutely clear. The Health Service is now treating 1 million more in-patient cases, 400,000 more day cases and 3 million more out-patients than in 1978-79.

The Opposition say that there are "less hospitals". I find that the most extraordinary charge of all. Let us leave aside that we are in the middle of a record hospital building programme, or the Labour party's record in shutting old hospitals. Let us just remember that in 1976 and 1977 the last Labour Government carried out the biggest cuts in hospital building in the history of the Health Service. Up and down the country, hospital building programmes were cancelled. There was a 30 per cent. cut in the building programme.

The reason for that goes to the heart of the debate. It was not that the last Labour Government wanted to make those cuts; they were forced to make them because of the collapse of their economic policies. If ever proof was needed of the connection between economic policy and successful social policy, that was it. The last Government had to cut, and what they cut most were capital programmes such as hospitals. It is the present Government who have restored the hospital building programme. Steadily, year by year, we have increased it. Parts of the country that had not had new hospital buildings since the war are now seeing them being erected. We now have a programme of 440 major schemes at a value of over £3 billion.

When we are judging the policies of the Opposition, we should remember the Health Service that they left. The headlines in the months before the present Government were elected in 1979 were not about the success of health care, but about its collapse. They were about patients being refused admission, and pickets substituting their judgment for the judgment of doctors. There were headlines such as "1,100 hospitals under siege" in January 1979. That was the achievement of the last Labour Government — the Government of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Member for Oldham, West, and the Government of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), supported by the Liberal party.

By all means let us debate the policies for better social provision, but let the public never forget which Government cut the hospital building programme and left record waiting lists. All that was achieved by the last Labour Government.

That was not one nation; that was a divided nation —a nation at war with itself. It is clear from the debate, however, that the Opposition have not learnt a single lesson from their failure. What is amazing is not the lack of public support for the Labour party but that 25 per cent. of the public are prepared to support it.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 244.

Division No. 156] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'stle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'ry)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley

Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. (Leeds S)
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allen (Bootle)
Roberts, Ernest (Hackney N)
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. (Coventry NW)
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest (Dundee W)
Ross, Stephen (Isle of Wight)
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare (Ladywood)
Short, Mr R.(W'hampt'n NE)
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.(Isl'ton S & F'bury)
Smith, Rt Hon J. (M'ds E)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thomas, Dr R. (Carmarthen)
Thompson, J. (Wansbeck)
Thorne, Stan (Preston)
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert (South Ribble)
Atkinson, David (B'm'th E)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Vall'y)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset N)
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. (Brighton K'to'n)
Bowden, Gerald (Dulwich)
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Britten, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & C'thpes)
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. (W'ton S)
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. (Plym'th S'n)
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clark, Sir W. (Croydon S)
Clarke, Rt Hon K. (Rushcliffe)
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Egger, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter (Angus East)
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George (Reigate)
Gardner, Sir Edward (Fylde)
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter (Portsm'th N)
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gryffs, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. (Epsom)
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul (N'folk SW)
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heyhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Holland, Sir Philip (Gedling)
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Howarth, Gerald (Cannock)
Howell, Rt Hon D. (G'ldford)
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert (Herts W)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger (B'ham N'field)
Knight, Dame Jill (Edgbaston)
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John (Pendle)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian (Havant)
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew (Berkshire)
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. (N'bury)
McNair-Wilson, P. (New F'st)
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal (B'grove)
Mills, Iain (Meriden)
Mills, Sir Peter (West Devon)
Mitchell, David (Hants NW)
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Hon C. (Devizes)
Morrison, Hon P. (Chester)
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard (Herts SW)
Patten, Christopher (Bath)
Patten, J. (Oxf W & Abgdn)
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter (Dover)
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark (N'port W)
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles (Pudsey)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis (Nuneaton)
Stewart, Andrew (Sherwood)
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald (Calder V)
Thompson, Patrick (N'ich N)
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Trippier, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill (T'side N)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. (Bexhill)
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John (Maidstone)
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes the Government's commitment to seeing all citizens of the United Kingdom share in the increased prosperity and improved public services resulting from the economic policies it is pursuing and applauds the Government's continuing commitment to the principles of one nation.

Legal Aid (Scotland)

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 31st March, be approved.

With this it might be convenient to consider also the second Government motion,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 31st March, be approved.

and the following Opposition prayers:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 365), dated 5th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 366), dated 5th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 381), dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 382), dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Aid (Scotland) (Children) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 384), dated 7th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

Mr. Speaker: Is that the will of the House? So be it.

Mr. Lang: These regulations made under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 increase the financial limits for legal aid and advice and assistance which were in force under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1967. They come into operation on the day after they are made. I propose to make them as soon as they are approved by the House.

The timing of the review of supplementary benefits has changed from November to April in two stages. The first was in July 1986, the second is today. The last legal aid uprating was on 25 November 1985 and the uprating provided for in these regulations combines the supplementary benefit changes since November 1985. The regulations increase the income and upper capital limits for civil legal aid and advice and assistance by an average of 3·1 per cent.

The lower income limit for civil legal aid, that is the level below which no contribution from income is payable, is raised from £2,255 a year to £2,325. The upper income limit, that is, the level above which legal aid is not normally available is increased from £5,415 a year to £5,585. The upper capital limit above which legal aid is not normally available is increased from £4,710 to £4,850.

As for advice and assistance, the upper income limit is raised from £114 to £118 a week and the capital limit from £800 to £825. The advice and assistance regulations also increase the lower income limit, below which no contribution is payable, from £54 a week to £56 and set out a revised table for contributions by applicants. The original intention was that the changes should coincide with the introduction of the new Scottish legal aid arrangements, but now the changes will more or less coincide with the changes in the supplementary benefit arrangements.

To turn to the regulations against which the Opposition have prayed, it may be for the convenience of the House if I explain fairly briefly the purpose and effect of the various regulations. They are, of course, all concerned with the implementation of the new arrangements for legal aid, which, like these regulations, came into operation on 1 April. To a large extent the regulations reproduce the gist of regulations that were in operation before 1 April, although they incorporate some features of the schemes, under which the Law Society operated. One of the objectives was to incorporate in the regulations only those items which were necessary, on the basis that the Scottish Legal Aid Board should have a large degree of flexibility in the way in which it operates.

Perhaps I might illustrate that by reference to the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations 1987. For example, regulations 5 and 20 set out a few requirements in relation to the form of application for legal aid and for a review of the refusal of legal aid respectively but do not prescribe an application form. Moreover, they do not purport to lay down the procedure which the board should follow in considering applications or requests for review. In this matter they comply with the views expressed during the passage of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 that unnecessary constraints should not be placed on the operation of the board. The regulations also make some changes not arising directly from the new legislation, for example, in relation to property recovered and preserved and in the termination of legal aid, but, as I have indicated, most of the changes are to adapt the previous arrangements to the new situation where the board has assumed responsibility. The situations in which legal aid is available and the responsibilities and liabilities of the applicant, of his solicitor and of the board are restated or redefined.

The advice and assistance regulations apply the same principle of translating the requisite parts of the previous regulations and the important elements of the legal advice and assistance scheme to meet the new situation. It has been necessary to add as appropriate provisions relating to assistance by way of representation. If hon. Members find it odd that these were not covered by the Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which were approved by the House last month, this is simply because those regulations were subject to affirmative resolution procedure, whereas these are subject to negative procedure. They are appropriately included here since ABWOR is a particular form of advice and assistance.

One of the objectives of the changes made by the Act and by the regulations is to make a clearer distinction between the circumstances in which advice and assistance on the one hand and legal aid on the other are made available. The Legal Aid Central Committee expressed the view that it would be of value to the oversight of the arrangements if information could be obtained about cases where advice and assistance were awarded and no account was submitted. This information would be more readily available under the new arrangements.

The Legal Aid (Scotland) (Children) Regulations largely reproduce the existing arrangements, subject to a degree of clarification, substituting the board for the Law Society and its committees as appropriate. As hon.

[Mr. Lang]

Members will appreciate, most applications for legal aid arising out of children's hearings are dealt with by the sheriff and the board is generally involved in dealing only with the comparatively few applications relating to appeals to the Court of Session from decisions of the sheriff.

Finally, I should mention the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations and the Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations, which simply reproduce the existing fees for civil and criminal legal aid, changing references to the Law Society and the like to references to the board. If these regulations were not in force, it would not be possible to pay the legal profession for work on legal aid applications determined on or after 1 April. I assume that that is not the purpose of the Opposition.

I should make it clear that the regulations do not fix new levels of fees. Offers have been made to the legal profession and it would clearly not be appropriate to discuss them in this context.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Why is it impossible to discuss the fees of solicitors and lawyers? We discuss the pay of nurses and teachers. Why can we not discuss legal fees?

Mr. Lang: Because the regulations do not relate to the level of fees. They relate to the transition from arrangements handled by the Law Society to the new arrangements handled by the board.

It has been difficult to anticipate which features of the new regulations are disliked by Opposition Members, but I shall do my best to answer any criticisms that they make.

10.22 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I welcome the opportunity to look at the new system and the various statutory instruments before us. I should start by declaring an interest as a partner in a Scottish law firm that practises in various centres in the central belt of Scotland and has a not inconsiderable legal practice. I value my connection, but it is somewhat tenuous and technical these days.

We have here a mass of paper, and the reason for it is the birth of SLAB — the Scottish Legal Aid Board. Many changes flow from that. I wish to raise a number of relevant points and I hope that the Minister will deal with them.

The Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations have made an unexpected appearance on the Floor of the House because of a little local difficulty in a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, over which I shall draw a veil. The regulations appear to include a standard and harmless uprating, but I am curious about how the uprating was decided. What criteria are applied?

The limit above which civil legal aid will not be available is to be increased from £5,415 to £5,585—an increase of £170. I am not sure why that figure has been chosen and it would be interesting to hear from the Minister what principles rule decision-making. Does it involve a GDP deflator, or an attempt to cover inflation? The increase looks to be a little less than the increase in inflation, but no doubt the Minister will be able to enlighten us.

The limit below which no contribution is required for civil legal aid remains frozen. That has not been uprated, which no doubt is a welcome, if somewhat meagre, saving from the point of view of the Treasury. Will the Minister say why that has not been uprated, as it will clearly affect some people?

A number of other points arise with regard to civil legal aid. One matter that I ask the Minister to deal with in his summing-up is the main civil legal aid scheme. This point has been drawn to my attention, and it is one of a number on which the Minister must be briefed because they have been put to him forcefully by the Law Society and have been reflected on by a large number of hon. Members.

As I understand it, civil legal aid, when granted under the new regulations, will run from the date of the grant, whereas previously, once civil legal aid was granted it was backdated to when the application was lodged. In other words, while the matter was being considered, if one was reasonably confident that legal aid would be granted, it was possible to prepare the case, knowing that once the legal aid certificate was safely in being one could charge for the work that had been done. Under the new regulations that will not be possible. I suspect that it will not save a substantial amount of money for the legal aid fund. No work will be done until the outcome of the legal aid application is known and the certificate has safely been granted. The result will be a significant and perhaps irritating delay in the processing of the matter. That is something on which the Minister could usefully comment.

I shall leave civil legal aid matters and move on to a matter of considerable importance, the legal aid advice and assistance scheme. We are considering some uprating orders. They are comparatively unexceptionable and I do not make anything of them; for example, the increase from £114 to £118 on the upper income limit and a number of such minor adjustments.

There are, however, some changes, to which the Minister referred, of a more substantive nature that appear to have been introduced. I have been approached by a solicitor who has a substantial practice in welfare law in Scotland. My attention has been drawn to regulation 15 of the Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Regulations 1987. The Minister will recall that this deals with a situation in which property moneys have been preserved or have resulted from the advice and action taken under the Legal Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1986, which allow the fees of a solicitor to be recovered from those moneys or, more important, the exemptions that are allowed in that situation.

I have been told by that solicitor, and I understand it to be true, that there are a number of exemptions that have, in effect, been withdrawn. One exemption that has been mentioned to me is that capital sums paid in lieu of element are not exempt, and there would therefore have to be a recovery of fees under the LAA (No. 3) Regulations scheme if that sum were to hand. Similarly, unemployment, sickness, maternity, invalidity and widow's benefit and industrial injuries benefit which I understand were previously exempt, will no longer be exempt. There are exemptions for redundancy payments and housing benefit. I do not want to enumerate and go down what is a lengthy list, but these are moneys which, if recovered or preserved as a result of a legal action under the LAA (No. 3) Regulations scheme, will now be liable to deduction of fees, which was not the situation under the previous arrangement.

It sounds rather like a carping point, but the Minister will appreciate that, though the sums of money are often comparatively small, the people who are interested in

unemployment, sickness or widow's benefit are of modest means, and therefore this could be a matter of some importance to them. The psychological effect of having managed to win an entitlement, perhaps of a modest sum, and then discovering that almost the entire advantage has been eaten up in the payment of fees, seems to be something that should, if at all possible, be avoided. I invite the Minister to look at that situation.

The advice and assistance scheme has been enormously enhanced by the Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Regulations 1987. This new scheme covers a criminal summary case in which a plea of guilty has been tendered. I understand that it is now impossible to get a full grant of legal aid for a plea of guilty and that legal aid becomes applicable only from the point at which a not guilty plea is recorded. No doubt the Minister will confirm that. Any representation in a case where a plea of guilty has been tendered and a person is appearing for sentence must be dealt with under the LAA3 scheme, which is affected by the regulations that we are considering.

I do not want to go in great detail through the ABWOR regulations, but I remind the Minister of one key point. The criteria for representation under the LAA3 scheme where a plea of guilty has been tendered are, first, that the solicitor must be satisfied that it is likely that the court will impose a sentence that could deprive the applicant of his liberty or lead to the loss of his livelihood. There is a second category, with which I do not need to weary the House, where an applicant is infirm, where there is a language difficulty, where there is a problem about mental capacity or some such related feature. By far the most important criterion for represention is where it is likely that the court will impose a sentence that could deprive the applicant of his liberty.

The trouble—this has been well canvassed—is that one is inviting the solicitor to battle on his client's behalf to save him from the possibility of a prison sentence while knowing that he has signed a certificate to get the applicant legal aid and that the applicant will end up in prison. That is rather extraordinary. Why has the Minister not been persuaded of the sensible provision that "may" should be substituted for "likely", so that the solicitor "may" be satisfied that the client may be sentenced to a period in custody? That important point will affect substantially the everyday operation of the courts. Therefore, it is right that it should be given an airing now.

Under the ABWOR arrangements there is special provision for pleas as to the competency of a complaint. An additional criterion has been added:

"it is reasonable in the particular circumstances that assistance by way of representation be made available".

It is extraordinary that assistance should not be available where a plea of guilty is tendered. I can think of a number of situations where there is a pressing public interest and where it certainly is in the interests of justice that a person tendering a plea of guilty should receive representation, but that person will apparently be excluded because the solicitor cannot find it is in his conscience to sign the necessary certificate to the effect that a prison sentence is likely to be imposed.

A person might be concerned about what to an ordinary mortal is a comparatively minor offence, but to an applicant for a civil servant's job a previous conviction would be a bar to employment, so that becomes a matter of great importance. It does not involve the applicant losing his livelihood and therefore is not affected by the present criteria. His future livelihood may be affected, but that is not something that the solicitor can take into account. For example, a disabled person may be likely to lose his licence. That would fundamentally affect the quality of his life, but not his livelihood. Because he is disabled, does not work and his benefit position is not affected, he would not be covered by these criteria.

One might get what, on the face of it, is a comparatively innocent breach of the peace, but one with which anyone who has practised in the courts is familiar and in which there are, for example, overtones of sexual harassment. There might be serious implications for the accused, but it could not be covered under the criteria laid down. It would be unfortunate if in such cases the solicitor had to have an elastic conscience and had to make a mockery of the criteria because they are so narrowly drawn, in order to do what was right by his client. That is an unsatisfactory situation in which to place solicitors, and one which the Minister should carefully consider.

From my own experience I am aware of the real problem of the rather strange condition that representation under the legal aid and advice scheme is available only on behalf of an accused who has not previously tendered a plea of not guilty. This raises fundamental difficulties, and, if the Minister does not recognise them, the Solicitor-General certainly will. A situation may well arise in which someone pleads not guilty and then consults a lawyer. The lawyer may tell him, as perhaps he is duty bound to do, that he does not have a sustainable plea of not guilty and that he should not waste the court's time. He may advise him not to go through all the nonsense of a trial, when at the end of the day he does not have a fighting chance. He may advise him to plead now or perhaps to enter an adjusted and partial plea. The solicitor advises, the client takes the advice, and the result is that he is then denied any possibility of legal representation. That is because he has submitted an original plea of not guilty and cannot get representation under the regulations.

A very common case in the district court in Glasgow is where the accused submits his plea of not guilty by letter, perhaps not really understanding the point at issue. He then takes legal advice and is told that in the interests of everyone he must change his plea. He does so, and immediately disqualifies himself from any from of representation, even if he meets the criteria which otherwise would have allowed him under ABWOR to have the services of a solicitor. That must be nonsense and that is a serious matter for people who might be at risk in the courts. I hope that the Minister will consider that.

There is a rumour that on occasions solicitors encourage their clients to maintain hopeless pleas of not guilty in order to be able to appear at trials and clock up fees. In my experience that is not a common form of malpractice. My experience is that most solicitors very properly look at the matter on its merits and advise a plea of guilty if that is right. This will be a considerable inhibition on the discretion of solicitors, because they will know that immediately they are putting themselves out of the game in terms of the client. This will mean that a large number of people will appear unrepresented in situations where they are at risk and where they clearly ought to have representation. That must be looked at most carefully.

I shall comment briefly on the other matters, because I realise that I have taken much of the time of the House. There has been a great deal of angst and a great deal of

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

proper concern about the 14-day rule that is being imposed. The Minister knows that under section 8(1)*(b)* of the Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations 1987 there is a provision that any legal aid application must be lodged within 14 days of the plea of not guilty being tendered.

I make the same point again. Many clients enter their own pleas. They go along and plead not guilty, or write in and plead not guilty. If it is Glasgow district court, they get a letter back saying that the trial will be held in seven months. That is the waiting time in the district court in Glasgow. The client says to himself, "That is fair, I have lots of time. I do not need to worry about that." After a few months the client realises that the trial is to take place in two or three months' time and goes along to see his solicitor. The first thing that he is told when he walks in is, "I am awfully sorry. Do not bother waiting around. Because you did not make an application within 14 days of submitting your plea of not guilty, you are no longer eligible for legal aid." That is irrespective of how pressing the accused's case may be, or the merits of his defence. That cannot be right.

I have had some correspondence with Ministers about this. They suggested that there was no problem because before he tendered his plea the careful client would prepare his legal aid application. The Solicitor-General must know that clients on summary complaints in our lower courts do not do that kind of thing. They tender their pleas and then think about legal representation, when it is demonstrably too late.

The legal aid application form runs to nine pages of questions in which complexity is piled upon complication. It is carefully drawn up, but the contrast with the previous form is striking. Even if there is consultation with the solicitor within the 14 days, there will be the greatest difficulty in getting the necessary information and the necessary financial evidence that has to be submitted with the application. The result will be that a large number of people who should be represented will be unrepresented. That is bad for the clients and, as I am sure the hon. Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock) will agree, bad for the court.

It will complicate the work of the court considerably if a large number of people who want to be represented have to appear unrepresented because they have missed the time limit. Stipendiaries and sheriffs all privately admit to hating above everything else cases in which the client is unrepresented, but in which important procedural and evidential points may be involved, so that they have to try to do the job of the defence as best they can within the limits of their role to try to ensure that justice is done. I believe that that situation will be infinitely more common as a result of the 14-day rule. The old scheme had a seven-day rule—seven days before the trial. That may be too tight a limit, and no respectable solicitor would want to leave it as late as that, but to take the limit right back to 14 days from the tendering of a not guilty plea is, in my view, a fundamental mistake and should be reconsidered.

I shall deal with the other points in short order. The first relates to the duty solicitor having, at least in legal aid terms, a total monopoly of the custody court in the sheriff and district courts. I appreciate that that is tidy, and on the face of it may save a little money, because if everyone goes through the duty solicitor there is a fairly substantial fee for the first client, followed by a small flat rate fee for the rest, until a cut-off point at which the cycle begins again. That is how I remember it, although it is some time since I had to fill in one of the green forms as a duty solicitor. If other solicitors come in for just one or two cases, on the face of it that may increase the cost.

I do not go for the high-falutin arguments. I think that the Law Society's suggestion that this may be a breach of the European convention on human rights is probably pushing the boat out a bit too far, but in practical terms it is important that the client should have the solicitor of his choice. That solicitor may have seen the client in the cells the day before and may have turned out in the middle of the night for an identification parade—perhaps the Minister will tell us how that is to be paid for under the new scheme—but he will suddenly have to tell the client that he cannot appear for him in court. That will lead to frustration and will greatly puzzle and irritate the client.

If the solicitor knows the client, he may even save money for the system because he will know all the circumstances. He will know about any other charges, whether the client is on bail for another offence, whether he is awaiting sentence on indictment and likely to go away for a long period, and because it is the duty of a solicitor to help the court, he will ensure that the court is properly informed of the circumstances. I believe that the result will be better, more expeditious justice, because the duty solicitor would take very much longer to establish those facts. In terms of efficiency, therefore there is a case for reconsidering that provision.

The arguments that I have advanced will not surprise the Minister. I shall not take up all the other points made by interested parties outside the House, but I believe that those that I have mentioned are important and substantial, and I hope that the Minister will accept that there is a case for reconsidering the position at least in the not too distant future.

I conclude on that note, as I recognise that others may wish to participate. I hope that the House will not feel that I have wearied it with irrelevant points, but that the matters that I have raised are of some substance. We are in the unfortunate but all too typical situation of having before us a series of provisions that we must either take or leave. We cannot amend, improve or tackle some of the points at issue. I accept the Minister's argument that we cannot reject the regulations because that would cause chaos in the system. That would be in no one's interests, and my hon. Friends and I are aware of that.

Given the shotgun nature of the position, the Minister has a duty to accept that there should be positive monitoring of what is happening. He should, perhaps, return in three months' time—or six, if that is more reasonable—with amending legislation, if that proves necessary. Or, if he does not think that that is necessary, he should at least issue a report containing the statistical facts and explain how he believes that the difficulties—I believe that they are real—have been overcome. Some undertaking of that kind is essential, because without it we might do genuine damage to the new system.

We did not oppose the setting up of the Scottish Legal Aid Board. We gave it a fair wind, and we are not trying to wreck it now. It has our good wishes, and I hope that it will be as effective as Ministers think it will be.

We must not remove representation from people who genuinely need it because of the need to economise—in the accountancy sense—on what Ministers have always

assured us is a demand-led system. Proper representation is essential, and must not be prejudiced. It is an important foundation of our civil liberties, and I fear that on the edges, and in some significant areas, it will become more difficult for people who are at risk to obtain the sort of advice and help with which a reasonable and proper legal aid system should supply them.

10.46 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I remember — when studying law — reading the judgments of a deceased senator of the college of justice who, on appeals, used to say, "There is nothing I could usefully add", and then speak on for five minutes to prove it.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has gone in considerable detail into the regulations and highlighted some of their shortcomings. I do not want to fall into the trap of repeating what he said. The uprating provisions in the financial conditions order are a source of concern. It appears that we are falling ever further behind the original intention of legal aid, which was introduced in 1949.

Legal aid should enable people of moderate means to have access to the courts. Increasingly, it would appear that, because of the financial limits, one must either be at the poor end of the scale or have considerable resources of one's own. Over the years, that has meant that people have not felt as prepared to pursue legal remedies as they once were.

Two criticisms of the regulations can be made. First, they will lead to further delays in the process of justice in Scotland. That is in no one's interests, and it was not Parliament's intention when the primary legislation was passed. The regulations that bar preparatory work pending a legal aid application apply only to the pursuer. The defender is allowed to carry out preparatory work. If no work is done until the legal aid application comes through, delays could result.

Secondly, the 14-day rule, to which the hon. Member for Garscadden referred, entails the problem that it is not inconceivable that a solicitor acting for the accused might seek an adjournment of the pleading diet to allow proper preparation of the legal aid application before a plea is made, so the 14 days will not start to run. That, too, will add to the delays.

The provision that one may not be able to claim representation if there has already been a not guilty plea could lead to people not changing their pleas in circumstances in which it would be in their own and in the court's interests to do so because that was the only way in which they could qualify for legal aid. All those problems will add to delay.

There are, however, conditions which could make legal aid less available. The financial conditions impose a real limit on access to the courts. There are complaints about the ABWOR system. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) is not here, as he made ABWOR almost a term of art in Scots law after our many sittings in Committee.

I do not believe that anybody intended the Act to restrict the availability of legal aid. Indeed, we were continuously assured by Ministers that it would make the system more efficient. The regulations have not lived up to that promise in many respects and they should be monitored closely. If amending legislation, or regulations, to meet our reasonable criticisms is brought forward, we shall be only too pleased to support it.

10.50 pm

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): I have no interest to declare in this subject, other than the fact that a goodly number of my constituents keep the legal profession in fairly comfortable circumstances.

Having read the Law Society brief and heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, I agree that there seems to be concern about the 14-day rule. I confess that I have no great knowledge of this matter, and my constituents have not made representations about it, but it seems worth keeping an eye on.

I am sure that the Minister will respond to the request for a review. If anything is wrong — the Government cannot have foreseen everything — I am sure that they will lay new regulations. That is a practical way in which to deal with the matter.

The new system must be better than the old one. If anyone was unfortunate enough to have his application for legal aid go before a certain stipendiary magistrate in Glasgow, who has caused untold harm in the city——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Sheriff David Smith.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend can speak for Sheriff David Smith. I shall not name the individual. I do not like naming people. I have had to write to the Minister and the Solicitor-General for Scotland about him. This guy should have been removed quietly behind the scenes because of the damage that he has done to the fairness of the system in Glasgow.

I have in mind genuine constituents who have never been in trouble before. One of the things that disturbs me is the number of young people on their first offence who plead guilty because they do not know the rules or simply because they give in. It is far too easy to say, "It is less bother. You do not get a fair crack of the whip. I might not get legal aid." Someone who is lucky enough to have a job might have to take time off. All the pressure is to plead guilty. That is not healthy.

The board has been under much pressure to get the administration of the new system into gear. I wish it success, but I hope that some of the matters about which concern has been expressed will be monitored carefully and that, if necessary, the Minister will return with suitable amendments.

10.53 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): There is hardly a Scottish Member of Parliament who has not sensed, during the past year or two, the growing difficulty of getting legal aid, especially for young people.

The criterion of "not in the interests of justice" seems to have been pushed to its limit. It is a new phenomenon, but I have come across it time after time recently, so I am pleased in one sense about the shift. It was quite unjustified that one person should make such a decision. But recently —I am certainly encountering it now—the criterion that justice does not demand the giving of legal aid has been applied to extraordinary types of crime. That, together with the law's delays, which have been bad, have been inimical to the practice of justice in Scotland.

[Mr. Norman Buchan]

Young people are increasingly encouraged to plead guilty. Names have been mentioned, and we are all worried about "murmuring" judges. It seems that the worst possible crime in Scotland is to murmur a charge, but judges at various levels are human beings, and some very curious things have happened. I am not sure how the board will cope with some of the problems. I hope that the system will be reviewed over not too long a period to see how it is operating.

I examine some of the fees being charged by senior counsel and solicitors, and some of the bad and dangerous decisions that have been made in the refusal of legal aid, and I come to one conclusion: sooner or later, we must move to a proper legal aid system, as we moved towards a proper National Health Service. I am not sure why the legal luminaries on the Conservative Benches are shaking their heads. We should consider some of the detailed forms that lawyers must fill in before they can be paid. The first copy per sheet costs 0·75p, with no more than 250 words per sheet. They have to be sure to mark the factor times 0·75p. There is the citation of witnesses, with each witness worth £3·30. For revising papers drawn up by counsel—for each five sheets or part thereof, £1·65. Those who find it easy to say to a young person "Plead guilty or I will not give legal aid on this occasion" are very good at working out the details of their own fees. We complain about the behaviour of young people, but look at the law and, as Shakespeare said, the law's delay and the proud man's contumely in the shape of some of our sheriffs.

In Glasgow and Edinburgh, the poor souls get only £219·50 for a day in court, but if they went to Aberdeen, Inverness or Dumfries, they would receive £356·50 a day. I measure that against the pay received on a youth training scheme.

Justice should be available to every man. We should not leave the decision to a sheriff, or a board, who may not have enough experience to make a decision. Those who read my piece last week in the *Glasgow Herald* will know that when I went through all the papers in the case of Paddy Meehan I found him irrefutably guilty, but he was innocent. I was one of those across whose desk the papers passed. Yet a sheriff could decide that there was no justification for granting legal aid in a similar case. The system must be changed.

There is only one way to change the system. In the case of the law, the Government should reverse the mad rush into privatisation. We should have a national legal service, just as we have a national education service and a National Health Service, so that each person can obtain advice and be properly defended, without this highly demeaning process for the legal profession.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Buchan: The Solicitor-General is nodding. He has a reasonable salary and does not need to charge per sheet. I am in favour of paying reasonable salaries, and against the demeaning process of analysing sheet by sheet the cost of legal advice. It must stop, and the sooner it stops, the better for justice in Scotland.

11 pm

Mr. Lang: We have had a useful debate. Like the regulations, it has ranged fairly widely. I shall try to cover as many of the points that have been raised as I can, so *far as they are relevant to the debate, perhaps even one or* two that may not be relevant to the regulations.

I noted with interest the suggestion by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) that the Faculty of Advocates should operate a youth training scheme. He might like to raise that with it himself the next time he is in touch, but I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to do so.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) raised several points. In the context of the Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, he asked how the limits were decided. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was also interested in that. The increases are related to increases in supplementary benefit. Since November 1985, they have averaged 3·1 per cent. The hon. Member for Garscadden will recall that social security benefits were raised in two stages, including July 1986, but the increase then would have been only 1·1 per cent., and it did not seem appropriate to make changes in the schedules at that time.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked why the supplementary benefit capital threshold had been left at £3,000. As it was not increased, the lower capital limit for civil legal aid was similarly not increased.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred to the level for those who qualified for legal aid, and managed to imply that a relatively limited number of people qualify. It is a substantial number—90 per cent. of those who qualify make no contribution. The maximum level at which free legal aid is permitted for a single person is £80.40 a week and can rise as high as £10,926 a year for a married couple with four children. The minimum level at which applicants become ineligible for legal aid would be £182.69 a week for a single person, which is quite a substantial figure, and could rise as high as £16,108 per annum for the married couple with four children.

The system is demand-led, as the hon. Member for Garscadden conceded, and it has risen in cost from 1978-79 when it was £7·4 million to £38·5 million in 1985-86. The estimate for 1986-87 is £45·6 million and for 1987-88 it is £48 million. So that answers the charge, which, in fairness to the hon. Gentleman, he did not make, but which many others have made, that the purpose of the rearrangement of the system is to claw back and cut down on those eligible for legal aid and the amounts disbursed in legal aid—[HON. MEMBERS: "That was not relevant."] It was relevant in the context of what was raised by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. It was the hon. Member for Garscadden who mentioned the term "demand-led", which made my comments relevant.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked why not pay legal aid from the date of application. That is not possible under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986, which provides for a clear separation between advice and assistance and any legal aid that is given on the same matter. While that split is most important for criminal proceedings, where criminal legal aid is now being supplemented by the new form of advice and assistance, ABWOR, or assistance by way of representation, a clear division between advice and assistance and legal aid is also helpful for civil proceedings. Advice and assistance will now be separately accounted for, instead of the present practice under which accounts are often not rendered for advice and assistance because it has been subsumed into later legal aid. That will improve accountability and control. If the solicitor and the

applicant take action before hearing the outcome of the application, one or both may have to meet the costs if the application is refused. However, that does not differ from the present position. Provision is made for applications to be dealt with as a matter of special urgency where that can be justified.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister say whether, in cases where there is defended action and legal aid is sought by the defender, defences can be lodged and no doubt the case can be assisted pending an application for legal aid? Why cannot sauce for the defender goose be sauce for the gander pursuer?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the new regulation 18A. He is probably referring to the representations made to us about defenders by the Law Society. But new regulation 18A is not confined to defenders, as the Law Society seems to suggest. For example, it covers the lodging of appearances and the sisting of an action while a legal aid application is determined. We have particularly in mind the interests of third parties other than defenders or pursuers. Pursuers would normally be covered, however, by regulation 18 of the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which covers applications for legal aid on matters of special urgency—for example, someone seeking an interdict.

The hon. Member for Garscadden raised the question of deductions. I am not absolutely sure about which deductions he is concerned. Is it those that can be made in the calculation of disposable income?

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry if I did not make my position clear. I understand that, under the LAA 3 scheme, if certain moneys were successfully recovered as a result of the legal process that was being funded the fees would not be deducted from them. I gave a number of instances—for example, benefits that are of particular significance in a welfare practice. Under the new regulations, I am told, these are not exempt, and the fees will therefore be clawed back from what is obtained.

I invite the Minister to comment on that simple point. I think that it is in section 15 of the new regulations.

Mr. Lang: I shall try to answer the question that I think that the hon. Gentleman is asking. If I do not cover it, perhaps he will pursue it with me at a later date.

The exemption of awards of capital or property in matrimonial cases is being restricted to £2,500, partly to remove an anomaly between Scotland and England and Wales which has existed since 1976. Logically, there should be no exemption, as there is none in other cases. However, the limit of £2,500 provides an element of protection in divorce cases. But perhaps the hon. Member is not concerned about capital.

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry; we are at cross purposes. I do not wish the Minister to misunderstand what I am saying.

Let us say that a client comes to see me, as a solicitor, and it is an LAA3 case. As a result of my efforts, £200 or £300 worth of benefits that have been denied to that person are recovered. There are a number of categories of benefit—invalidity benefit, widows' pensions and so on—which at present would go to the client without my fees being recovered from that capital sum. Under the new system, there is no such exemption.

The point has been put to me by a number of solicitors, and I invite the Minister to confirm that it is so. Perhaps the Minister will write to me.

Mr. Lang: Perhaps I shall, but I shall try to answer the hon. Gentleman's question now.

I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to schedule 3, concerning capital. No account is taken of a person's main home and its furnishings, his clothing or tools of trade. Deductions are made from his present capital for debts that he will have to meet in the next 12 months, although naturally debts due to him are taken into account.

I could proceed to tell the hon. Gentleman at considerable length the deductions regarding an applicant's disposable income. Deductions are made for expenses—including the expenses of a business and, for an employed person, travelling expenses—for payments to a union or professional association and, if it is reasonable, for the cost of caring for a dependent child while the applicant is working away from home. There are a number of other factors that I could cite to answer the hon. Gentleman's question. However, if he is not satisfied with the points that I have made, perhaps he would like to write to me when he has had an opportunity to read what I have already said in the *Official Report*.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to say a brief word about the criteria for an award of ABWOR. The Law Society had suggested that the use of the word "likely" was against the spirit of the Act. It is not; it is to be found on the face of the Act, in section 24(3). It has always been the intention, as was stated during the passage of the 1986 Act, that criteria for ABWOR for guilty pleas should be related to the relevant factors taken into account in assessing interests of justice in the case of not-guilty pleas.

The criteria in the ABWOR regulations, which were approved by both Houses last month, are, accordingly, broadly similar to the factors set out in section 24(3)*(a)* and *(c)* of the 1986 Act. Section 24(3)*(a)* states that legal aid will be provided if

"it is likely that the court would impose a sentence which would deprive the accused of his liberty or lead to his loss of his livelihood".

It is quite wrong to suggest that the requirement is unfair and against the spirit of the Act.

I had better move on from that point, as it is probably out of order in the context of the present debate.

Mr. Dewar: What is or is not out of order is a matter for the Chair. We are considering the LAA3 scheme; a number of the orders relate to it. As for ABWOR, I should like the Minister to consider the point that it is very easy to imagine a number of cases where there would be a clear public interest in there being representation, but representation is excluded by the narrow nature of the criteria. I suggested a few of the criteria during the debate.

The other devastating point that the Minister ought to deal with is that the client who puts in a plea of not guilty and then takes legal advice and recognises that he must plead guilty is automatically — never mind the circumstances, or the risk that he faces, or the effect on his livelihood—disbarred from any form of representation under the legal aid scheme. That cannot be right. The Minister is under a duty to say a few words about that.

Mr. Lang: I fear that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will tell me that I have a duty not to do so, but I shall certainly consider what the hon. Gentleman has said. We have already debated upstairs the ABWOR regulations. I fear that the hon. Gentleman was not present when we did so.

Mr. Dewar: I was not on the Committee.

Mr. Lang: The fact that the hon. Gentleman was not on the Committee did not prevent him from attending another Committee hearing the other morning, of which he was not a member. I have covered that point here and also in the debate upstairs on the regulations.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred to a guilty plea being entered after a not guilty plea having been entered originally. Again I shall tempt the Chair by answering briefly that point, to which the hon. Member for Garscadden also referred. Assistance by way of representation is available only when the accused has not previously tendered a plea of not guilty. That does not mean that the accused will not be legally represented if he changes his plea to guilty. He must apply for legal aid within 14 days after he has pleaded not guilty. It would be unreasonable to provide that an accused should be able to obtain ABWOR after the Scottish Legal Aid Board had determined that he should not be awarded legal aid. That point is valid also in the context of the debate that was held upstairs.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Minister give way on that very important point?

Mr. Lang: No, I do not think that I should give way to the hon. Gentleman again. I have given way to him a number of times. I have already answered points that both of us know are out of order in the context of this debate, because they are not the subject of the regulations against which the hon. Gentleman has prayed.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the Minister entitled to decide for himself and for hon. Members what is or is not in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am taking into account the mood of the House tonight.

Mr. Lang: I fear that I am straining your tolerance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, close to its limit.

The 14-day rule is also part of the criminal legal aid regulations against which the hon. Member for Garscadden has not prayed. I shall tempt your tolerance a little further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by referring briefly to it, since the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) also referred to it. It is reasonable and sensible for there to be a date by which applications for legal aid have to be made that relates to the pleading diet rather than to the trial diet. To work backwards from the trial does not seem to be a sensible or a wise move. The suggestion that there should be a seven day limit from the trial seems to be taking it far too close to the date of the trial.

We want to provide for the quicker and more efficient dispensation of justice. I have considered this matter carefully and have had meetings with the Law Society and the Glasgow Bar Association. We have considered their views, and by moving to a 14-day provision from the pleading diet we have to some extent met the case that they put to us. The Legal Aid Board and the Law Society have declared that they intend to make the new system work, and we shall watch it closely and make sure that it does work.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister will remember that I said that there would be difficulties if people, particularly in the lower courts, pleaded not guilty by letter. When they know that their trial date is seven months away it will be very difficult to persuade them to complete the legal aid preparations within 14 days. What would the Minister say to a young man who might face a prison sentence in the impending trial who has missed out on the 14-day rule? If there were a substantial number of such cases, would the Minister be prepared to reconsider the matter?

Mr. Lang: We shall keep a close watch on the situation and, naturally, if we were to feel that it was not working satisfactorily we should seek a way of making sure that it did. I am certain that as the hon. Gentleman considers it objectively and dispassionately he will realise that it is in the long-term interests of the accused and in the interest of quicker and more efficient dispatch of justice to have the application for legal aid handled at an earlier stage of the proceedings rather than at the last minute, which may be many months after the case originated. That cannot be a satisfactory long-term solution when we are trying to improve the dispatch of justice.

I assure the House that the Government are aware that we are entering a new era with the establishment of the Scottish Legal Aid Board, though the regulations before us tonight do not make many significant changes in the present provisions. We and the board will be keeping a close watch on how the system works in practice. If adjustments in the regulations prove necessary in the light of experience we shall certainly be prepared to make them.

I would not be willing to give a three-month commitment to carrying out a review or, indeed, any specific time commitment, but we shall certainly look closely at the operation of the arrangements and whenever it seems appropriate we shall be willing to consider any changes.

I ask the House to reject the motion against the regulations, which are necessary for the operation of the new arrangements which came into force last week; but to approve the financial conditions regulations laid before it on 31 March.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 31st March, be approved.

LEGAL AID (SCOTLAND)

Resolved,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 31st March, be approved.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

CRIMINAL JUSTICE (SCOTLAND) BILL *[Lords]* *[MONEY]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(a) of any amount payable by the Lord Advocate in respect of—

(i) the remuneration or expenses of administration appointed under any such Act;

(ii) any compensation payable under any such Act in respect of the serious default of a procurator fiscal or other person acting on behalf of the Lord Advocate in connection with the investigation of certain offences;

(b) any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Lord Advocate in consequence of any such Act; and

(c) any increase attributable to any such Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act; and

(2) any increase attributable to any such Act in the sums falling to be paid into the Consolidated Fund under section 203 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1975.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

LEGAL AID

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.).

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1987, dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th March, be approved.

That the Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1987, dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th March, be approved. — *[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Play Board

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

11.16 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I must begin by apologising to the House for my appearance. I have already been hailed this evening by one colleague as an albino Adolf Hitler. I have just come out of hospital following an operation on my nose, and I pray to God that the bandage does not slip; otherwise there will be a premature conclusion to the Adjournment debate.

The title of the debate is not strictly accurate. I now think that the future of the organisation and funding of children's play would have been more appropriate because it would be wrong to presuppose that Play Board, as it was constituted, was the best body for that purpose. For many years the National Playing Fields Association, under the directorship of Bob Satterthwaite, endeavoured to fulfil this function. But with mounting operating deficits, in spite of support from the voluntary service unit of the Home Office, NPFA had no alternative but to give notice in 1981 that the service would have to cease.

As a consequence, NPFA launched its campaign "Time for Play" to persuade the Government to accept responsibility for children's play. On 20 October 1982, during an Adjournment debate on children's play, I asked the Government to act on the all-party call for the recognition of the importance of children's play and for designation of an existing Minister to add children's play to his other responsibilities and to assist in its promotion.

On 22 April 1983 the Prime Minister said that she had asked the Minister with responsibility for sport to take special responsibility for co-ordinating children's play. She said that the Secretary of State for Education and Science would continue to have responsibility for play activities organised through the education service and the Secretary of State for Social Services for play activities of local authorities' social services departments. She said:

"I have decided upon these arrangements in view of the leading role of local authorities' recreation departments in providing out-of-school play facilities, and the extensive funding of play activities through the urban programme. But I am also well aware of the very important role played by voluntary organisations in developing children's play activities, and of the importance of play in enabling children to discover themselves and to develop their capacity for initiative and self-discipline." — [*Official Report*, 22 April 1983; Vol. 41, c. *189*.]

The House will note that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recognised that the importance of play to children goes far beyond physical recreation. It is a basic element in their health and development, not only physically but mentally, emotionally and socially.

This debate is therefore about organisation of the leisure time or out-of-school play and recreational needs of children, mainly, although not exclusively, in the five to 16-years-old bracket. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane), the previous Minister with responsibility for sport, moved with commendable speed following his appointment. Some might think that he moved a bit too fast. Although I appreciate the enormous number of organisations involved in children's play—more than 2,000—I wonder whether there was enough consultation. Within three months, Play Board appeared as a fait accompli. It was an

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

appointed voluntary board, which was formally launched on 19 July 1983, with a budget for that year of £600,000 and for the two following years of £700,000 per year.

In passing, it may be worth reflecting that NPFA was unable to continue in business because it was short of only £150,000 the year before, so there was a big jump in expenditure.

In addition, there was a provision that after the initial three-year period Play Board would have to find 25 per cent. of its own funding, I think that that was probably wrong, because Play Board's Government funding is core funding—that is, it is to cover central essential costs. Other sources of income are not readily tapped for what is perceived by donors as administration, even though the services provided through advice, research, information and so on are not administrative but functional elements for a total package geared to improving the quality and quantity of the provision for play.

We should also put that £700,000 core funding into perspective. There cannot be any accurate figures for the total cost of children's play provision, but informed sources feel that it must run into tens of millions of pounds per annum.

Another problem was that the provision of this core funding for only three years put stress on the staff due to uncertainty about the future, although additional core funding was found for one further year. I think that the then Minister sensed difficulties when, in 1983, in an interview in *Play Times*, he said:

> "This is not setting up another voluntary organisation. It is just providing a large umbrella for all the existing bodies, so that all the people who are members of these can form an amalgamation."

He said that he attached the utmost importance to the Government not providing the structure of a Government departmental quango. Instead, he set up what is properly known as a "qualgo".

Play Board was born of the voluntary sector. Its board of trustee directors reads like a "Who's Who" of those people with real experience of children's play from all its angles, but I wonder whether the balance on that original board was right. Whether it was right or wrong, we should pay credit to the work that it and its predecessors have done, and to Play Board's leaders, Raymond Clark and Ian Gibson.

Play Board has certainly made progress, but somehow it has never managed to get its act together. Throughout 1986 it lacked a chief executive, and the Department of the Environment was absolutely right to review the future structure and role of Play Board following the submission of a corporate plan setting funding in excess of £1·3 million for an increased establishment. On 21 September 1986, the Department announced its intention that the function and role of Play Board should be merged with the Sports Council.

Against this background urgent negotiations commenced, involving representatives of the Sports Council and Play Board. I do not think that there was any consultation with the voluntary sector. Provided that agreement could be reached on the future nature, scale, structure and responsibilities, the Sports Council could recommend to the Department funding for a further six months to allow time for detailed arrangements to be sorted out. No agreement was reached, so on 31 March this year Play Board was wound up.

What went wrong? The decision to allocate the responsibility for play to the Department of the Environment rather than the Department of Education and Science was understandable, but it may have been wrong. Many observers tend to associate children's play with sport and recreation. The reality is quite different. Play is different from sport. Much of the time spent in play is passive rather than active, informal rather than formal. It involves painting, music, reading, imagining and role-playing, and they are all as important to a child's development as playing a game with rules. The constitution of Play Board incorporated an elected body from the working area, the National Play Advisory Committee. I believe that that committee has become far too political, much to its detriment.

What now? The NPAC has sought opinions from all local authorities, more than 200 national bodies and in excess of 2,000 voluntary organisations, about the Minister's proposals. Some 80 per cent. of the replies were against becoming part of the Sports Council's responsibility. It is important to understand that the "play field"—as I call it—is not involved in a rescue operation for Play Board. It accepts the DOE's diagnosis that Play Board has made mistakes, although those have not been quantified by the Department beyond the implied desire to achieve "results and value for money". The "play field" cannot accept the Department's proposal for a cure for those ills. The NPFA and the NPAC have stressed the need for an independent national organisation for play. There is major concern that the success of Play Board in creating a growing awareness of the importance of children's play will be lost within the monolithic structure of the Sports Council which has neither the will nor the expertise to make it work.

The play world is united in its belief that the Sports Council is not the right vehicle for children's play. In addition, the National Out of School Alliance, Fair Play for Children, the National Play Bus Association, the Handicapped Adventure Playground Association and national Gingerbread have expressed their strong opposition to the proposed merger. Similar letters have been received from the National Association of Local Councils, the Association of County Councils, the Merseyside Council for Voluntary Service and many of the 56 affiliated county playing field associations.

On 5 March 1987 the trustee directors of Play Board voted against the Minister's merger proposal. The Sports Council has, as yet, made no public statement about its intentions, although in the past it has consistently avoided involvement in children's play. I have recently heard reports that the regional councils for sports recreation have stated that play is the very last thing that they want. I appreciate that there is a need for action. However, I believe that the Minister is in danger of acting with undue haste.

However, there is nothing like impending execution to concentrate the mind. On 18 March this year, the National Playing Fields Association, under the general directorship of Colin MacFadion and Sandy Gillmore's chairmanship, submitted proposals to the Minister for the future role and structure of an independent national organisation for children's play supported by the major national organisations involved in children's play. That provides a

realistic and cost-effective alternative for the greater benefit of our children. Those of us with an interest in children's play urge the Minister to consider that proposal. We firmly believe that it meets the criteria that the Minister requires while at the same time offering the independence that children's play needs and deserves.

I am sure that the Minister will be aware from the more than 100 signatures that accompany early-day motion 690 — which appears in my name — that many hon. Members also feel that he should take time, before coming to a quick conclusion, to give the proposals every consideration. The first Minister responsible for children's play succeeded in politicising it. The second is in danger of nationalising it. I, and the children for whom I speak, want to see it back in the independent sector.

11.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I am, indeed, grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) for coming here in some obvious physical adversity and raising this important issue, which gives me the opportunity to reaffirm the Government's strong commitment to help develop children's play. I say "help develop" because, contrary to the views of some, children's play, by its very nature, is not an activity over which the Government should, or could, have complete and direct control. Local authorities, together with the very many excellent voluntary bodies involved, are best placed to judge local needs and they, rightly, are the main providers of opportunities and facilities. Of course, parents must also take a large measure of responsibility for catering for children's play needs.

What seems to have been brought into question — wrongly, I should stress — is the Government's recognition of the importance of children's play and of its separateness from sport. I want to make it absolutely clear that the Government's commitment to children's play is, if anything, stronger now than it was in 1982-83 when my hon. Friend first drew our attention to the need for more Government action.

As my hon. Friend has explained, that earlier debate led to Government support for a new voluntary organisation called Play Board to co-ordinate the efforts of the very many other voluntary organisations concerned with play, and to promote and develop better and more play facilities. Since 1983 Play Board has received £2·4 million from the Department of the Environment to cover its administrative costs — about £700,000 each year. In addition, over £6 million has been spent each year from our urban programme on play-related projects; the Department of Health and Social Security has spent £6·5 million between October 1983 and March 1987 on initiatives for the under fives, and together with the Department of Education and Science, the DHSS provides about £800,000 each year for other voluntary organisations involved with children's play.

Mr. Colvin: I forgot to mention that NPFA's proposal will cost only £350,000 in the initial stages, which is half what Play Board cost last year.

Mr. Tracey: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing us up to date, though I was aware of that information.

The various contributions from Government Departments represent a considerable investment in, and commitment to, children's play. However, it is plain from the contributions that we have read in newspapers and letters that many people believe there is a dastardly plot afoot to submerge the activity of play into sport and to deprive children's play of its separate identity and independence. That belief is misinformed, and has been heightened by some mischievous lobbying. Indeed, a recent, and well-circulated, letter from the National Play Advisory Committee was so blatantly emotive and outrageous—and possibly libellous—about my apparent lack of concern for children that I can only question the real motives behind it and the lobby that it has fuelled. My hon. Friend made one or two suggestions about the activities of some lobbies.

Children's play is a separate activity from sport, and I have never argued or suggested otherwise. If anything, it is even more diverse and difficult to define than sport, but it is certainly just as important as sport to the overall development of children and requires expertise on advisory bodies. With four young children of my own, I need no persuading of play's importance in their lives.

Let me also set the record straight about our aims for the future, and I welcome the support of my hon. Friend for these aims. I mentioned earlier, as did my hon. Friend, Play Board. We supported the setting up of Play Board in 1983, but we were not prepared to keep it or any other organisation afloat with public funds if it did not present value for money. That lack of value for money was identified during our review of Play Board in 1986—the year when Play Board told us that it would need £1·3 million, rather than £700,000, in future to cover its administrative costs.

In my view, one of Play Board's main failings had been its inability to raise private sector funds for children's play —an aim that the organisation agreed to pursue right from the start. Let us look at the massive support other activities—such as sport and the arts—receive from the private sector. I wanted to ensure that children's play benefited in its own right from private sector investment too; but that was not happening. There is every reason to believe that it can happen. As a result, the Government did not decide to stop funding children's play, but we decided to look for another, and more cost-effective, way of achieving better benefits for children with the money that was earmarked for Play Board from this financial year onwards. These considerations had, and have, no implications whatsoever for the DHSS and DES substantial support for children's play, nor for the support that the activity receives from the Department of the Environment's urban programme.

In September last year I proposed to Play Board that its role and functions be merged with those of the Sports Council. I stress again that our aim in so doing was not to submerge play into sport, but to bring to children's play the proven ability and experience of a major, well-recognised body to raise private sector funds for the benefit of play, and to deal effectively with local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Both organisations agreed to enter into exploratory negotiations to identify a way forward, the aim being to work up a proposal that could be considered by Play Board's board and the full council, which includes the 10 regional sports council chairmen. Two key factors in the

[Mr. Tracey]

subsequent discussions were, the possible future employment of Play Board's staff within the council, and the development of a structure that would maintain play's independence and separate identity.

I know that this proposal caused concern among some of those involved with children's play, but it also received support, notably from the Association of District Councils, which is the major provider of play opportunities and facilities.

Mr. Calvin: Mr. Ian Gibson, who is the chairman of Play Board, is a member of the Association of District Councils.

Mr. Tracey: It is true that Mr. Ian Gibson is vice-chairman of the Association of District Councils. He is also the eminent leader of Portsmouth council. That does not mean that he controls the thoughts of the Association of District Councils. It is a body with a proven record for representing the interests of district councils, and I believe that it did so in this case.

It was with great disappointment and astonishment that I learnt of Play Board's decision, on 5 March, to withdraw from the negotiations with the Sports Council and to liquidate the company, the more so because of the implications that those decisions had for Play Board's staff, who now face redundancy, and the consequences for the experience that they had gained, which could have been built on in the future.

I know that many members and ex-members of Play Boards, including the chairman, two vice-chairmen, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities' representative and a former member of the National Play Advisory Committee, regretted the decision. Nevertheless, their responsible and realistic attitude did not prevail and Play Board has now entered into liquidation.

I know also, as my hon. Friend has explained, that other organisations concerned with children's play have their own views about how the future should shape up. I have seen the National Playing Fields Association's alternative proposals for the future, the National Play Advisory Committee's proposals and Fair Play for Children's alternative proposals, and I have heard from others who believe that they have the right ideas about the way forward. I am not questioning their genuine concern to ensure that greater benefits accrue to children's play from the arrangements that we adopt for the future, nor am I dismissing their ideas. I remain convinced that further discussions with the Sports Council hold the best prospect of identifying a mechanism for achieving greater benefits for children's play in a more cost-effective way. Those discussions will include consultations with some other organisations at the appropriate time and they will certainly address the concern raised in the House.

What I want to achieve above all is not another three difficult years during which a new mechanism, or even a new voluntary organisation, develops and tries to become established. I want to see the Department's, the Government's and the taxpayers' investment produce value for money and early benefits for children's play.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 7 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

JOHN ERNEST ROLFE AND FLORENCE IVIEN ROLFE (MARRIAGE ENABLING) BILL *[Lords]*

As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS (Costs)

1. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the per capita cost of the National Health Service throughout the United Kingdom in 1986; and what it was in real terms in 1978-79.

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Services in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what the percentage was in 1978.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): Between 1978 and 1985 the proportion of the United Kingdom gross domestic product spent on health care rose from 5·2 to 6·0 per cent. Over the same period, health spending increased from £301 to £384 per head at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Galley: Is not this 26 per cent. increase per person throughout this country one of the most accurate indicators of health provision, suggesting vastly improved services and better health care for all? How does this increase compare with other Western countries?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The real growth in total health spending per head in the United Kingdom between 1978 and 1983 was about 21 per cent. and according to OECD data — 1983 is the latest comparison that we have—that growth rate was higher than in any other Western industrialised country, with the exception of the United States.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these figures provide an interesting reflection on the priorities of Conservative and Labour Governments?

Mr. Fowler: Indeed. The base figure that I am quoting in the figures is the base figure that we inherited from the Labour Government. If we want to go back to cuts in the NHS, we must go back to the last Labour Government and their cuts in the hospital building programme.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that when similar claims were made in Scotland yesterday the genteel members of the Royal College of Nursing howled the Minister down? Nobody in the country, not least the 1986 Select Committee report on expenditure in the social services, believes a word of the boasts that the right hon. Gentleman continually makes about the Health Service. Is he aware that if we take into account the index used by the NHS with regard to pay and prices, and take account of demographic and technological changes we see that there has been a decrease in real expenditure on the Health Service between 1979 and today?

Mr. Fowler: What the hon. Gentleman said is typically absurd. Quite apart from the figures on finance, which he has entirely wrong, the real figures on health care, showing the number of patients treated, have shown a real—

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Many are having to be treated twice.

Mr. Fowler: Well, surely the hon. Gentleman is most interested in health care, in treating patients and in providing for better health care. That is what the Government are providing through the Health Service.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that since 1979 nurses' pay has increased by 23 per cent. in real terms, and that contrasts with the fall of 21 per cent. under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Secretary of State should come clean with the House and confirm that the United Kingdom spends a lower proportion of its gross domestic product on the Health Service than any European Community country, apart from Greece and Portugal.

Does he accept that the logic of the argument that he and his colleagues adduced yesterday — that if one increases the total cake everybody gets a bigger share—is that we should increase the total expenditure on the Health Service as a proportion of GDP? That is the answer to the health inequalities from which Britain is devastatingly suffering. In that way, we would remove some of the horrendous inequalities that his Government were embarrassed to admit only a week ago.

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept for one moment that there are horrendous inequalities, and the report that the hon. Gentleman is holding is no objective indication that there are. The policy of the reallocation of resources and the resource allocation working party has meant a redistribution of resources to those areas which were deprived of them under the last Labour Government, supported by the hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Would not that excellent record on increased health expenditure mean even more in terms of better health care if steps were taken to control the escalating cost of pharmaceuticals on the NHS? Are not some doctors still wasteful in their prescribing habits, and will my right hon. Friend take steps to encourage them to prescribe generically where possible?

Mr. Fowler: We advise doctors on good dispensing and good practice, but I am sure my hon. Friend recognises that the selected list introduced by the Government has meant a saving to the NHS of about £75 million. That policy has been entirely vindicated, despite all the opposition from the Opposition.

Mr. Dobson: If the nurses are doing so well under the Government, why did 30,000 qualified nurses and 6,000 nurses in training leave the NHS last year?

Mr. Fowler: That must be put against the total nursing strength of about 380,000. It is relevant to consider the proportion. The hon. Gentleman must explain why the nursing profession had to wait for this Government to introduce an independent pay review body, which it was never given by the last Labour Government, whose record on nurses' pay was a disgrace.

Mr. Speaker: May we have briefer supplementary questions, which will lead to briefer answers?

Hospital Beds

2. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state his policy relating to the provision of hospital beds for convalescent patients within the National Health Service.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): The level and extent of provision of beds for convalescence is a matter for individual health authorities.

Mr. Waller: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the limited number of hospitals providing special convalescent facilities for patients supply a demand existing over a much bigger area than a regional or district health authority? The Grove convalescent hospital in my constituency receives patients from all over the north of England. Therefore, is it right that a regional or district health authority should be able to make a decision to end such facilities, regardless of the broader or national dimension, which certainly exists?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that the proposals to which he refers are being formulated and there would have to be widespread consultation before any decision was made. Should there be objections from the relevant quarters, they would come to Ministers to determine and, in that event, we would take account of factors such as that which my hon. Friend mentioned.

Mr. Carter-Jones: If there is a change in the provision of convalescent beds, will the Minister seriously take into account the importance of applying rehabilitation techniques within those convalescent places? Will he make sure that there is adequate back-up from the paramedical professions?

Mr. Newton: It must be borne in mind that there has been a substantial drop in the number of convalescent beds in Britain because of changing practices, and the modern approach to rehabilitation may well entail a different way of dealing with patients after they leave hospital, which is not something that I would wish to discourage.

Mr. Jessel: Is my hon. Friend aware that at the West Middlesex university hospital some 96 beds are taken up by people who, in the opinion of Hounslow and Spelthorne district health authority, need neither medical nor nursing care? As those beds are needed for other people who need treatment, will my hon. Friend see what can be done?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly look at my hon. Friend's point. He will be aware that health authorities can consider a variety of options in such circumstances, including making contractual arrangements with private or voluntary residential or nursing homes.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that there are three options when there are insufficient beds in the National Health Service? One is that patients stay on too long, with the result that their beds are not available for those in greater need of them. The second is that they should be released into the community, but there are not enough resources and care in the community. Thirdly, that they may be forced into private facilities, as the Minister suggested a moment ago. Are not those three options unsatisfactory?

Mr. Newton: I respect the hon. Gentleman's views, but that was a wild series of generalisations. The position differs from area to area, but the general thrust has been to build up community care resources in a way that affects the issue of convalescent beds.

Unemployed Persons (Mortgage Interest Payments)

3. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people he expects will lose by the changes in the payments of mortgage interest for the unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): Our latest estimates suggest that just over 70,000 claimants will be affected at any one time by the recent changes in supplementary benefit payments for mortgage interest for new claimants under 60.

Mr. Barron: Is it not typical of the Government that they first put people's homes at risk by cutting the mortgage interest rate relief by half in the first 16 weeks, and then tell people to take out insurance policies against that happening to them when they become redundant? The Government then have the gall to send out a circular to say that they will take at least part of that money away from such people if they take out those policies.

Mr. Major: We are not putting people's homes at risk, and there is no evidence to that effect. If the hon. Gentleman reads the remarks of the Building Societies Association he will see that it made that point clearly. There is no reason to suppose that people will lose their homes because of the change.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that people who voluntarily take on the responsibility of home ownership, and who stand to gain enormously from the benefits of that ownership are reasonably obliged to accept all that it entails? They should make provision for themselves and not necessarily look to the state as the first resort in times of difficulty.

Mr. Major: That is a fair and valid point. Even from the first day of unemployment 50 per cent. of mortgage interest remains payable through the social security system, and the full amount is payable after 16 weeks.

Mrs. Beckett: Is it not extraordinary for the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) to congratulate the Minister, as he was one of those who during our debate sang the praises of mortgage protection policies? Is it not outrageous for the Minister to defend the policy in those terms when he well knows that if people have taken out insurance policies, which in any case are not very good value for money, the Government will take the money from them, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said. What sort of way to proceed is that?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) is being entirely consistent in

his remarks today and in those that he made on an earlier occasion. We still have the most generous system of assistance with mortgage payments of any country in Europe.

Mr. Frank Field: May I ask a supplementary question to No. 3?

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Field: Question No. 4, Sir.

Epilepsy

4. **Mr. Frank Field** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about attendance allowance to people suffering from epilepsy.

Mr. Major: Attendance allowance is available to people suffering from epilepsy who fulfil certain conditions for attention or continual supervision. These matters are adjudicated by the attendance allowance board or a doctor delegated on its behalf. The interpretation of the "continual supervision" criterion has been affected by the Court of Appeal judgment in the case of Mrs. Dorothy Moran. The attendance allowance board is preparing revised guidelines on this matter for use by its delegated doctors.

Mr. Field: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he now answer the question in simple English, so that disabled people can understand? Will the Government now dispute the success of Mrs. Moran by going to the House of Lords, even though the Court of Appeal refused her permission to do so? Will the Minister extend his congratulations to my constituent, Mrs. Moran, for scoring her success? Is it not uncharacteristically ungenerous of the Minister not to extend his congratulations to the two lawyers — Mr. Nicholas Warren and Mr. Richard Drabble — who, on this and many other occasions, have advanced the Government's policy that everyone should remain within the law, including the Government?

Mr. Major: On the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am not quite sure of the current score between Mr. Drabble and the Government.

Mr. Dobson: Four all.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Major: Perhaps there is cause for congratulations on both sides. As regards the appeal, about which the hon. Gentleman asked his substantive question, we do not propose to appeal against the judgment.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend look into the circumstances whereby epilepsy can be caused by the defecation of dogs in public areas? When he has done so, will he support his hon. Friend in the Home Office in taking action to clean up our parks and other areas, which are disease ridden at the moment?

Mr. Major: I admire my hon. Friend's ingenuity. I am not sure whether his supplementary question is related to the attendance allowance, but I shall ensure that Home Office Ministers are aware of his concern.

Mr. Seamer: Is my hon. Friend aware of the difficulties that arise for parents of children below the age of two years who are not entitled to claim attendance allowance, while a parent who is fostering a child who is severely handicapped and disabled is entitled to claim the allowance? Does he agree that this is an unfair discrimination?

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that matter, which I am examining.

Southend General Hospital

7. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has now received from the general public on the proposal by the North East Thames regional health authority to close the radiotherapy unit at Southend general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): We have received 15 letters which have been referred by hon. Members, together with about 1,100 letters direct from members of the public. If Ministers are required to make a decision on the proposal, we shall take into account all the representations that have been received.

Mr. Taylor: Does this flood of letters not show the serious concern that a regional health authority, which claims to be short of money, is planning to spend £4 million on closing a modern and efficient unit and to build an entirely new one 30 miles away, when there is no guarantee that it will attract as many patients as the Southend unit? Will my hon. Friend seek to remove the damaging uncertainty among staff and patients by trying to persuade the authority to abandon this silly empire building?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is right to suggest that the proposals involve an increase in expenditure, but not a cut in services. We expect that we shall receive rather more representations in the near future, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has agreed to receive a petition that bears more than 90,000 signatures.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Minister aware that the regional health authority's plan to close the unit at Southend will mean many of my constituents, including those who are suffering and ill, having to travel much longer and more difficult journeys to receive treatment? On that ground, will the hon. Lady discourage the authority from putting into effect the absurd plan of closing the much appreciated radiotherapy unit at Southend?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady will be aware that the proposal involves only the radiotherapy unit. Other forms of cancer diagnosis and treatment will continue as at present and I have no doubt that they will continue to command the confidence of local people. The problem is how best to organise high-tech services, which are expensive and which need to be concentrated if we are to provide a good service.

Mr. McCrindle: Without commenting on the case that is being made by Southend, and before my hon. Friend becomes over-impressed by the public relations campaign and the petition to which she has referred, will she take note that other of her hon. Friends who represent Essex constituencies applaud the regional health authority's decision to construct a pupose-built cancer unit at the Harold Wood hospital? Will she take on board the fact that on this occasion, if on no other, the voice of Southend is not necessarily the voice of Essex?

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who I am sure speaks very much for his constituents, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). His comments serve to demonstrate the heat that is in this kitchen.

Mr. Hayes: I am sure my hon. Friend appreciates that she will require the judgment and wisdom of Solomon to resolve this problem. Those of my constituents who are cancer patients presently travel to north Middlesex, to a hospital that is under threat of closure. The choice appears to be between Harold Wood and Southend. My concern, and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), is that our constituents who are suffering from cancer will have to travel an inordinate distance — a journey that will be uncomfortable and unpleasant—to attend the Southend unit. We find that intolerable.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend will remember that during the debate on cancer on 13 February I said that we would attempt to get a more up-to-date view on the extent to which stress and travelling problems have an effect on the treatment of patients who are suffering from cancer, and that commitment stands.

Mr. Dobson: When will Ministers recognise that instead of dealing with each piecemeal proposition from each of the four Thames regions for the reorganisation of cancer treatment it would be better if Ministers got the four regions together, knocked their heads together and got them to produce a comprehensive plan for the treatment of cancer covering the arrangements in an area containing 13·25 million people?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman is keen on telling local health authorities what to do, and we have made careful note of his views on that sort of centralisation. However, it is no good doing all that unless the money is available—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I recall that whereas the North East Thames regional health authority is now receiving a total of over £1 billion in revenue, under the Labour Government, supported by the hon. Gentleman, the total was only £407 million, barely 40 per cent. of what it now receives. The result is that we can now seriously discuss improving the quality of cancer therapy for all the patients concerned in the region, whereas under the hon. Gentleman's Government they did not have a chance.

Dr. Michael Clark: My hon. Friend will know that my constituency is in the Southend health authority area. She will also know that the North East Thames regional health authority proposes to reduce its number of cancer treatment units from nine to six. Is she aware that the population of south-east Essex is one quarter of the population of the North East Thames regional health authority? Therefore, is it not eminently reasonable that at least one cancer treatment unit should be in south-east Essex?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend adds some sensible comments to the discussion. If the community health councils in the neighbourhood continue to object to the regional health authority's proposals, those proposals will come to Ministers for a decision. We do not expect that to happen before the end of this year and we will take into account all the representations made to us.

AIDS

8. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on Government measures to combat AIDS.

Mr. Fowler: Action to combat the threat of AIDS continues to be one of our highest priorities. The latest research on our public education campaign shows an exceptionally high level of public awareness of how the AIDS virus is transmitted and how to avoid infection. We are continuing to develop the campaign. In addition, we have provided increased resources for research, counselling and care, and last month I convened two conferences: on predictions of the spread of HIV infection and on community care for people with AIDS.

Mr. MacKay: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the success of his public education campaign. If the number of AIDS victims being suggested as likely to arise in the next few years is reached, is he satisfied that there will be enough hospices?

Mr. Fowler: That is one of the areas in which we are planning increased provision. We will need not only more hospices but more hostel accommodation and more community care. All told, we need more community care involving not just the Health Service but the voluntary services and the social services as well.

Mr. Corbett: Why are there no proper AIDS counselling facilities available in Birmingham, to haemophiliacs identified as carrying the virus?

Mr. Fowler: We are providing resources in Birmingham but if there is a specific area of need I shall certainly look at that and seek to remedy it.

Dame Jill Knight: Bearing in mind the extremely serious implications of AIDS, what steps does my right hon. Friend have in mind to deal with the hard Left Militant Labour councils which actively promote homosexuality among children? Is it not ridiculous—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Ban public schools.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dame Jill Knight: I did not go to a public school.

Is it not ridiculous that large sums of public money should be spent on proselytising and encouraging homosexuality in schools while other sums of Government money should be spent in trying to stop the spread of AIDS?

Mr. Fowler: I do not believe that anyone would support or encourage homosexuality among young children, and I believe that that view is shared on both sides of the House.

Mr. David Young: What budget has the Secretary of State allocated to research on AIDS? What proportion will this be of the entire health budget? What research projects are being carried out internationally into this disease?

Mr. Fowler: We have just announced a £14·5 million directed research compaign, organised by the Medical Research Council, which I believe is one of the most exciting and potentially most succesful campaigns. In addition, research campaigns are being organised in other parts of the world, notably in the United States and in European countries.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is not the only way to contain this killer disease, for which there is no known cure, and for which there is unlikely to be a cure for at least 10 years, to have widespread public screening of those at risk, so that those groups among which the disease is spreading can be ascertained and identified, and also so that the people who are carrying this deadly virus can be identified and treated?

Mr. Fowler: The argument on compulsory public screening, which is what I think that my hon. Friend is suggesting, means that one has to ask the next question, which is what one does with that information. Does one then advocate a policy of isolation? It is all very well talking about treatment, but, as my hon. Friend has said, treatment is not possible at the moment. We are looking at aspects of testing, although not at compulsory screening. There is now a consensus that public education is the No. 1 priority for a disease for which there is neither a vaccine nor a cure. I hope that my hon. Friend will support that also.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that while the Government have given a commitment on publicity and research, they have given no commitment on future clinical care, which is far and away the most costly item in the AIDS budget? Will he confirm the projection of the DHSS on the spread of AIDS, which suggests clinical care costs of about £90 million within the next two years? How will this be met? Will the Secretary of State confirm that health authorities' existing expenditure on AIDS is now funded centrally only to the extent of about one quarter, so that, already, large funds are having to be diverted from other essential health care? Is this not yet another sign of the gross underfunding of the NHS?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman must grow up a little in some of the points that he is putting. As even he knows, we do not fund centrally individual programmes throughout the NHS. That is not the way that we have done it, nor the way that he, when he was in government, did it. I do not know where he gets the forecast of £90 million. We recognise the duty that is on us to provide resources so that people can be treated with decency and compassion. I hope that he will support us on that.

Mr. Stern: What advice will my right hon. Friend be giving to dentists in the NHS on the treatment of patients who are antibody positive? Will he be going along with the recommendation made in some parts of the country that such patients should be treated within specialised facilities, or will he continue to recommend treatment as part of the normal service?

Mr. Fowler: As my hon. Friend knows, precautions are already being taken. I hope that we shall be issuing fresh guidance shortly.

Income Support

9. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to include in the rates of income support to be proposed a sum to compensate for any rate contribution demanded from those on income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The illustrative figures published in the technical annex to our White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) make no assumption about increasing the income support rates to compensate specifically for an average minimum contribution. Final decisions about the level of income support rates have not yet been taken, but the hon. Gentleman may be reassured to know that the illustrative figures showed that the majority of people on income support would not experience any reduction in disposable income overall.

Mr. Rogers: Has the Minister noticed that the recent report of the Social Security Advisory Committee suggested that the proposal, which will make the poorest pay 20 per cent. of their rates, will cause real hardship, and that any switch to a community charge would make the scheme unworkable? Will he therefore scrap the proposition?

Mr. Major: I am afraid that I cannot take the action that the hon. Gentleman proposes. As he will know, when spouses and non-householders are taken into account, in many authorities more than half the adult population do not pay for half the services that they enjoy. That cannot be right.

Mr. Dorrell: Will not the income support scheme, which has been the result of intensive and widespread negotiation, be designed to ensure that adequate resources are available to everyone to maintain a decent and reasonable living standard? Against that background, is it not unthinkable that a rise in costs should not be matched by a rise in means?

Mr. Major: The first part of my hon. Friend's point is entirely accurate. However, the essence is that the illustrative figures set out in the White Paper alone show that the majority of people on income support would not experience a reduction in disposable income overall.

Mr. Hugh Brown: Surely that is quite wrong. During the proceedings of the Abolition of Domestic Rates (etc.) (Scotland) Bill it was admitted that those in receipt of supplementary benefit—presumably going on to income support—would still have to pay 20 per cent. of a rate bill for which they are not now liable. When will the Government make a decision on that? It is under social security legislation.

Mr. Major: The illustrative figures set out in the technical annex take account of the 20 per cent. rate contribution.

Mr. Ralph Powell: Does my hon. Friend think that, when the new system comes into operation, more or fewer people will receive state support?

Mr. Major: A whole series of different intangibles must be fed into the equation. I should be unwise if I were drawn into giving a specific answer.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister clarify the point at which the interface is reached between rate contribution and income support? Is he saying that his Department and the Scottish Office are at one?

Mr. Major: We are one Government. Therefore, we are clearly at one.

Mrs. Beckett: How can the Minister justify the statement that he has just made, that the illustrative figures in the White Paper show that no one will lose? Clearly, an increased rate charge of 20 per cent. is intended, and the illustrative figures for the unemployed show no increase in income. The facts do not bear out the Minister's answer.

Mr. Major: I fear that the hon. Lady, uncharacteristically, is wrong. The facts do bear it out. The illustrative figures published with the White Paper clearly show that the majority of people on income support will not suffer any loss in disposable income.

Social Fund

10. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received about draft guidelines on the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

11. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he expects the majority of payments from the social fund to be made as grants or as loans; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the guidelines on the social fund will include an indication of cash limits to be imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Draft directions and guidance for staff on the operation of the social fund from April 1988 were issued to interested organisations, for comment or for information, on 25 March. Comments were requested by 26 May, and to date no representations have yet been received. Decisions on the size of the social fund, its division between grants and loans and its allocation to local offices will be announced nearer the introduction of the second phase of the social fund in April 1988.

Mr. Michie: The draft guidelines published last week explicitly suggest that no help will be available for those paying fuel bills. Does that mean that the Government, despite all their boasting throughout last winter, intend to abolish the severe weather payments scheme in April 1988 without replacing it with another scheme?

Mr. Major: We have repeatedly said that we will keep under review the exceptionally severe weather payments. We shall reach our decisions at the conclusion of this winter.

Ms. Richardson: The draft guidelines suggest that grants will be made only to those coming out of community care. Will the Minister confirm that that means that any pensioner who applies to the social fund for help will receive only a loan? If that is so, pensioners will be very aggrieved and will feel discriminated against.

Mr. Major: That is not necessarily the case. There will be circumstances in which community care payments will be desirable. We have sought to set those out in the draft guidelines. The purpose of issuing the guidelines in draft form is to take account of representations, including those that may be made by the hon. Lady or by any other hon. Member.

Mr. Cohen: Do not the draft guidelines and the new social fund rule out not only grants but budgeting loans for such items as expenses to cover starting up in a new job or the returnable deposit that is needed to obtain accommodation? Is that not a false economy? Have not the restrictions been included only to make sure that the social fund is strictly cash limited?

Mr. Major: The social fund is replacing a whole series of regulatory entitlements that have not worked adequately. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should carefully re-read the draft guidelines, because he may then find that he has just misrepresented them.

Mr. McCrindle: Will the Minister confirm that, because of the obvious elasticity of demand, any payments from the social fund relating to maternity or death grants will not be cash limited?

Mr. Major: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that in order to win a narrow vote in another place the departmental Minister there stated explicitly that there would be no formal cash limits on the social fund when it is introduced, yet the draft guidelines that were issued a week ago state that there will be a budget? Will the Minister describe the difference between a budget and cash limits? Will he also confirm the ministerial hints that this budget will involve a cut of about £75 million for some of the most vulnerable families in society, and that forcing them to repay loans out of future supplementary benefit payments will drive them deeper into poverty and debt?

Mr. Major: The cash limit applies to the fund generally. The individual budgets apply to local offices. The hon. Gentleman was, frankly, inaccurate about much of what he had to say on the other matters.

X-ray Service

13. **Mrs. Golding** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to meet the Society of Radiographers to discuss the future needs of the X-ray service within the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: We have no immediate plans to do so.

Mrs. Golding: I am sure that the Minister will be aware of the concern of the Society of Radiographers that it was not consulted before the Forrest report on screening for breast cancer was published. Is he aware that the society thinks that 600 additional radiographers are needed to cope with the additional work load? Is he also aware that last October the Society of Radiographers said that its school was 34 per cent. below the numbers needed to meet the demand? What do the Government intend to do to ensure that the Society of Radiographers is able to train sufficient radiographers to enable the breast screening programme to go ahead?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady has asked quite a number of questions. The advice that has been given to me, based on the Forrest report, is that only about 200 additional radiographers will be needed for the programme in the next three years. To answer the main thrust of the hon. Lady's question, the Department of Health and Social Security, the regional scientific officers of the National Health Service and the College of Radiographers have made a joint submission to the manpower planning advisory group for a study of radiography manpower to be completed in time for the 1988 student intake.

Supplementary Benefit

14. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of supplementary benefit claimants in the Leeds, West constituency for the current year and for 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): In February this year, some 27,000 claimants were receiving supplementary benefit from the two local offices which serve the Leeds, West constituency. The equivalent number for February 1979 was 20,000, but the figures are not strictly comparable because the boundaries have changed.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister accept that the figures are also not strictly comparable because of the basis on which supplementary benefit is awarded? Is the Minister not concerned that there should be such a level of deprivation in our inner cities, which has such a debilitating effect on a small section of the population, which is forced to live at subsistence level and which appears to have been given no hope by this Government?

Mr. Lyell: The hon. Gentleman ought to recognise that the real value of supplementary benefit has risen by 6 per cent. since 1979.

Appeals Tribunals

15. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Social Security Commission to discuss the future of appeals tribunals.

Mr. Lyell: Officials maintain continuing discussions with the office of the president of social security appeal tribunals and medical appeal tribunals. I have no immediate plans to meet His Honour Judge Byrt, the president.

Mr. Loyden: Can the Minister give an assurance that the Government intend to maintain the appeals system in the benefits system? Will he take account of the fact that there appears to be some pettifogging bureaucracy that is discouraging people from attending appeals tribunals on the side of the appellants? Will he give a further assurance that he will investigate matters of this sort and see that those friends and other people who attend on behalf of appellants are encouraged, not discouraged?

Mr. Lyell: I can certainly give the assurance that we shall continue the appeals system. It works well. Those claimants who seek to appeal are encouraged to bring people with them. I should make it clear that it is our policy to pay expenses for a friend or witness who comes to a tribunal except where he or she is a paid member of an organisation and is attending in that capacity.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Ann Winterton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 April 1987.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I am attending a dinner to mark the 30th anniversary of the Institute of Economic Affairs.

Mrs. Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the light of the many achievements of the present Government, not least low inflation, rising productivity and growing world respect, morale on the Conservative Benches is extremely high at present? Will my right hon. Friend assert today that the decision on the date of the next general election is hers and hers alone and does not depend on media hype, pressure or speculation?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend's assessment that the economic position and economic prospects are good. I am glad to give her the assurance that the date of the next general election will be decided not in Fleet street but in Downing street.

Mr. Kinnock: When the president of the Royal College of Nursing warns that if pay and conditions are not improved the service will crack, will the Prime Minister give the nurses their well-earned due, or will she give them the same patronising, self-satisfied response as was given by her Minister at the RCN congress yesterday?

The Prime Minister: It was this Government who set up a nurses' pay review body. It was this Government who last year accepted the increase of 7·8 per cent. recommended by the pay review body. It was staged. Nurses' pay as a result of that award was one third higher in real terms than in 1979, even before the last July increase. Under the present pay scales a ward sister on the maximum of the scale is £2,700 a year better off than if pay had simply been indexed since 1979. Our record on nurses' pay is very good indeed, and the right hon. Gentleman's Government could not hold a candle to it.

Mr. Kinnock: If conditions are as wonderful as the Prime Minister describes, why, does she think, did that most dignified of professions barrack her ministerial mouthpiece yesterday? If the nurses do not believe the Prime Minister, why should anyone else? As far as the pay review is concerned, since the Prime Minister failed to honour the recommendations last year and the year before, will she now give me, the nurses and the whole country an undertaking that she will honour the recommendations of this year's review in full, pay the increase in full, date it from 1 April and not evade, dodge or give short change as she has done in the last two years?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman does not recall that under Labour nurses received pay increases of less than the rate of inflation for three years in succession. Our record on nurses' pay and on the reduction in working hours — because the number of nurses has increased by 60,000 and their working week cut by two and a half hours with no drop in pay — is excellent. We have not yet received the pay review body awards. They will be considered carefully when we get them.

Mr. Waller: Recalling my right hon. Friend's recent visit to the Soviet Union, may I ask whether she agrees that the Soviets, perhaps better than any other nation, can understand the terrible carnage that conventional warfare can wreak? Thus, is it not misguided for people in this country to concentrate on nuclear disarmament, especially one-sided nuclear disarmament? Would it not be a better and nobler ideal to seek mutual confidence, leading to real security in Europe and elsewhere?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. When we are discussing disarmament matters, we have to consider nuclear, conventional and chemical weapons. If we are to get the reduction of weapons that we seek consistent with the defence of this country and its

continued security, we must look for increasing trust and confidence. For that, we shall have to see how the Soviet Union honours its treaty on the Helsinki accord and what it does over Afghanistan.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister instruct the Secretary of State for Education and Science to bring forward immediately positive proposals for the restoration of teachers' negotiating rights and a timetable to go with them? Will she recognise that if she fails to do that the teachers' dispute, which we deplore, will get more acrimonious?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman is well aware of our position. We have granted a considerable increase in teachers' pay. Recruitment of teachers, particularly in physics and mathematics, is going up. The arrangements that we have made in the meantime for teachers' pay negotiations are temporary until we reach a permanent settlement.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend take time during the course of her busy day to comment on the fact that total National Health Service spending is 300 per cent. of what it was in 1979? How does she reconcile that with what some people call "cuts"?

The Prime Minister: The National Health Service has many more resources under this Government than it had under the Labour Government. Those resources are found not by Governments but by the people who pay taxes—income tax and value added tax. Taxpayers pay well over twice what they did when we came to power. Any increase has to be met from their pockets. There is no other way.

Q2. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. McDonald: What does the Prime Minister propose to do about the fact that one in four jobs for trained nursing staff in London is now vacant?

The Prime Minister: The National Health Service Management Board has commissioned a report to look at particular problems over the recruitment of nurses in London. The study team expects to report by late spring and the board will then consider what action may be required. So that is already being considered.

Q3. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alexander: Has my right hon. Friend had time to read recent reports of brutality towards young soldiers in training? Will she confirm that those reports represent a deviation from the high standards expected and usually achieved in the British Army? Will she confirm that brutal NCOs and the officers who turn a blind eye to their acitivities will be rooted out and transferred to areas away from recruit training?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that bullying will not and must not be tolerated in the Army or elsewhere in the armed forces. Reports that junior soldiers have been bullied are being thoroughly investigated, and if the allegations are substantiated firm disciplinary action will be taken against offenders.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Prime Minister accept that, though the teachers are involved in a struggle with the Government, I want to ask her a question about nurses? Does she realise that 30,000 are leaving the nursing profession each year. Although all of us need nurses—and very often urgently—they are being treated to howling abuse from her party. They are struggling as best they can for all of us, and they are being treated obscenely. Does the Prime Minister not realise that the nurses are struggling to stay in their profession and to help the rest of us?

The Prime Minister: This Government's record on pay to the nursing profession, on reduction of hours in the working week for nurses, and on the increased number of nurses in the National Health Service is better than that of any other Government in the whole history of the NHS. As I indicated earlier, on present-day scales, before any proposals are put before us for new scales, a ward sister on the maximum of the scale would be £2,700 a year better off then if pay had simply been indexed by the RPI since 1979. That is a good record. It is no wonder that there are now 60,000 more nurses in the Health Service than there were eight years ago.

Q4. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Browne: Will my right hon. Friend accept that in March this year new car sales were up by 8 per cent. over last year and new car imports were down 5 per cent.? Is this not a clear indication that, under Conservative leadership, our economy is increasingly product-competitive and far more prosperous?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. It is very good news that car manufacturers here—whether Austin Rover or Jaguar or the multinational car manufacturers—are increasing their sales to the home market. It is part of the recovery of manufacturing industry, which is now doing very well under the policies that are being pursued by this Government.

Q5. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: Is the Prime Minister not even slightly embarrassed by the greed and avarice that the sell-off of state-owned industries at well below their market value seems to have incited in some people? Will she explain to the House why it is that these matters were discovered by the Labour research department and not by the Government's own watchdog?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to say about any particular case, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman expects a reply on a particular case. Privatisation has led to millions of employees having shares that they would never have been able to have. There are now up to 8 million shareholders. That, of course, means nothing to the Labour party except bad news, because it leads to independence and personal prosperity, both of which are death to its policy.

Mr. Aitken: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to carry out a review of the unfair Japanese domination

of the once again postponed financing arrangements for the Channel tunnel? Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Eurotunnel's prospectus, for every one British bank involved in the financing, seven Japanese banks have signed up? In order to avoid these unfair 7:1 ratios and the creation of a Franco-Japanese Channel tunnel, will my right hon. Friend intervene to insist on proper national investment quotas and limits?

The Prime Minister: I am not certain whether my hon. Friend wants a Eurotunnel to be built. I want a Eurotunnel to be built and I think, therefore, that I will interpret his question as inviting more British banks and British institutions to apply to finance a very exciting project.

Q6. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Prime Minister tell the House what action the Government are taking to check the statistical validity of their recent claim that one in five people in this country own shares?

The Prime Minister: The Treasury's record on professional statistics is extremely good. I am not quite sure whose statistics the hon. Gentleman is questioning. If he writes to me and lets me know, we will see what we can do.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after the Standing Order No. 20 application.

Eric Bemrose Plant, Liverpool

3.31 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed loss of 700 jobs at the Eric Bemrose plant in Liverpool announced yesterday."

The plant is actually in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), and he has taken an active interest—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members please leave the Chamber quietly and not walk in front of the hon. Member who is speaking?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend the Member for Walton is taking an active interest in support of the workers at the plant and has kindly agreed that I should raise this matter from my constituency viewpoint.

The matter is extremely important because the losses will add to the already unacceptably high unemployment that we are experiencing on Merseyside. Therefore, every effort must be made to prevent the job losses. It is also specific to my constituency as my local authority, Knowsley borough council, together with the Department of Trade and Industry, was at a very advanced stage in negotiating a financial package that would have involved moving part of the operations from a site in Knowsley to a new plant with up-to-date technology.

The company concerned is part of News International, a group which, as the House is well aware, has a less than happy recent history in these matters. The people of Merseyside, not least those in the trade unions, are anxious that the position should not develop along lines similar to the recent Wapping dispute. We hope that the whole issue can be discussed and debated to see whether the devastating decision can be reversed. To that end, I hope that the proposed move to the Knowsley site can be examined and discussed more fully before any irrevocable steps are taken.

The matter is specific and important. It would be thoroughly irresponsible not to discuss fully all the alternatives to closure. I hope that the House will have an opportunity to do that.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed loss of some 700 jobs at the Bemrose plant in Liverpool."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Privatisation (Multiple Share Applications)

3.34 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have twice in the past few days asked for a Government statement on the matter of multiple share applications. Outrage is felt among the ordinary public in this country about Conservative Members lining their pockets at the expense of ordinary people. I believe that, in view of that, we have a right to an explanation about the Government's attitude on privatisation and multiple share applications, particularly when they are made by greedy Conservative Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. There are well known provisions for dealing with matters of this kind, and the hon. Lady should operate them.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that last week during business questions I asked the Leader of the House a question on this matter. You intervened halfway through my question to prevent me——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One thing hon. Members cannot do is to raise points of order with the Chair about something that happened last week and that should have been raised at the time. Points of order must be relevant to today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am hearing a point of order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that my point of order must draw on previous statements made in this House, including a statement made yesterday by the deputy leader of the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)? I must be allowed the right to make a perfectly reasonable point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am asking the hon. Gentleman to relate it to what happened today or, if he must, to what happened yesterday, but certainly not to what happened last week.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yesterday my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook intervened during the debate and you, Mr. Speaker, intervened to prevent him from raising the matter. You said:

"The tradition is that we do not criticise hon. Members, except by motion."—[*Official Report*, 6 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 23.]

You also intervened, Mr. Speaker, during the debate last Thursday evening in exactly the same way when I raised this matter, and you told me that I was not to discuss the matter on the Floor of the House. The answer that you gave to my right hon. Friend was very clear, and I ask you to give me the right to spell out my point of order.

The answer that you gave to my right hon. Friend yesterday was that these matters should be dealt with by motion. I have endeavoured to table two motions and you yourself, Mr. Speaker, had to amend one of them. They both had to be substantially amended and, in my view, the sense was lost. Therefore, it is not possible for hon. Members to table motions on this matter, despite the fact

that you assured my right hon. Friend yesterday that he had the right to do so. What is clear from all these rulings, Mr. Speaker, is that you feel that you are not in a position to allow debate to take place in this Chamber on an important matter.

My hon. Friends the Members for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) also endeavoured to table a motion last week. It took one and a half hours of negotiation with the Table Office to clear that motion. It is not possible to table motions in the way that hon. Members want to table them. Therefore, if we clear aside the prospect of motions and the possibilities of intervention either from the Back Benches or from the Dispatch Box, clearly it is not possible for hon. Members to raise this matter in the House.

There are two matters, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not take part in a debate with me on this matter; he is raising a point of order. Come to the point, please.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Parliament is, therefore, not in a position to speak about these matters.

Two matters of order need to be raised. First, there is the interaction between the courts and Parliament on the issue of contempt of the House on which you, Mr. Speaker, are being asked to rule. Will you confirm that in considering issues of privilege and contempt you do so wholly independent of decisions taken in the courts, that you are not required to await a decision on prosecution, and that the House of Commons is completely free to take its own decisions? These are matters of order, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, this matter relates to the rights of Parliament to ensure that it is not brought into disrepute by the actions of its Members. When a Member acts dishonourably, it is not Parliament that prosecutes but the courts, and the protection of the integrity of Parliament, unless Parliament exercises the right to expel, passes from the hands of Parliament to the Executive. In this case the Attorney-General has a duty to prosecute immediately. That is my case. The Attorney-General, by failing to prosecute——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot be held responsible for what the Attorney-General may or may not do. May I confirm to the hon. Member — this is an important matter of considerable interest to the House — that the reason why I stopped him last week was, as he well knows, that he had raised the matter with me as a matter of privilege in an entirely correct way and until I had had an opportunity of considering the matter it would not have been in order for him to raise it on the Floor of the House.

With regard to yesterday, the practice of the House that governs reflections by one hon. Member on another is clearly set out in "Erskine May" on page 430:

> "Unless the discussion is based upon a substantive motion, drawn in proper terms"—

that is to say, a motion which admits of a distinct vote of the House—

> "reflections must not be cast in debate upon the conduct of . . . Members of either House of Parliament."

That passage sets out the proper way in which the conduct of an hon. Member may be debated, if that is what the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) wants to do. "Erskine May" makes it clear that to use any other method of proceeding for that purpose is out of order, and if that course were to be taken the Chair would be obliged to intervene. That is a long-standing rule of the House that I am bound to uphold, as did my predecessors.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have not finished my point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have ruled on the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have not made my point of order.

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have not made my point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have not made my point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have ruled on the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat at once.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Speaker, may I finish my point of order?

Mr. Speaker: I must say to the hon. Member that, unless he resumes his seat, I shall have to ask him to leave the Chamber.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take Mr. Sedgemore.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether you will help the House. I accept your ruling that if one intends to criticise an hon. Member one must do it on a substantive motion that can be debated. Last week my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) put down early-day motion 841. I was the second signatory of that motion. I stumbled across my hon. Friend when she was having some difficulty with the Table Office. We were told that the motion was perfectly in order but that there were people in the House who did not want it put down. I accept that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know nothing about that matter. I rule entirely as laid down by precedent whether early-day motions are in order. I do not take into account whether people in the House or anywhere else wish them to be put down.

Mr. Sedgemore: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did not intend to say this, but we were told, rightly or wrongly — and my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley can verify this — that you were the person who did not want the motion put down. We were told by the Clerk of the House. My point is this. I accept —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The point of order is to me.

Mr. Sedgemore: I accept that we do not want a licence for Back-Bench Members to abuse other hon. Members. Equally, I respectfully submit that this is a debating chamber which, as has often been said by past Speakers, is a tinderbox which is liable to explode at any time. We

[Mr. Sedgemore]

cannot be governed by club rules that may be interpreted only by certain individuals. I respectfully suggest that we need rules that are precise and easily capable of understanding by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley and myself. That is my only point.

Am I not right in saying that if a motion is in order it should go on the Order Paper and that it should not need a debate lasting one and a half hours to get it put down?

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of conversations in which I did not take part. I say again to the hon. Gentleman that, if motions are in order, they may appear on the Order Paper. However, I am also aware that there was, as I understand it, some kind of concordat between the usual channels. That may well be to what the hon. Gentleman is referring, but I have no knowledge of it.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to discuss yesterday's exchanges, which have been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and which are recorded in column 23 of the *Official Report*. You will recollect, Mr. Speaker, that you intervened in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and said:

"we do not criticise hon. Members, except by motion"—[*Official Report*, 6 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 23.]

I read—I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, have re-read it—the paragraph preceding your ruling. My right hon. Friend was referring to the Tory party cynically surviving on double standards. "Erskine May" makes it plain that that is quite in order, that is, to refer to a collective party rather than to individuals in those terms.

My right hon. Friend then went on to refer to two hon. Members in terms that were not critical of the hon. Members; he was merely asking innocent questions. He was asking a very innocent question about — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I do not know what hon. Members are getting so sensitive about. My right hon. Friend asked an innocent question about what the hon. Member who represents Anglesey — I prefer to call his constituency Anglesey because I do not know how to pronounce his constituency — would say to an unemployed man who applied six times for supplementary benefit? That was a perfectly innocent question. My right hon. Friend also referred to the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram), and it was at that point that you, Mr. Speaker, intervened.

You must have known, Mr. Speaker, the context in which my right hon. Friend was asking those questions, because it has all been in the press. Both hon. Gentlemen have admitted that they applied for more than one allocation of shares in the relevant companies.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have charges made against each other across the Chamber other than in the way I have already suggested to the hon. Gentleman. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order?

Mr. Hamilton: I am suggesting that your intervention was misplaced because my right hon. Friend was not making, and never did make, specific charges. The charges have been admitted to in the press by the two hon. Gentlemen involved. The point at issue for you, Mr. Speaker, is how the good name and integrity of the House is protected in view of the reprehensible behaviour of those two hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: I intervened, as I was bound to do—for reasons that I explained at the time and repeated today—to warn the right hon. Gentleman that he was getting into an area where he should be extremely careful. I must say to the House again, as I said yesterday, that, like every other Member of the House, I am bound by our long-established rules and practices. I intend to uphold them.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I entirely accept the passage from "Erskine May" that you, Mr. Speaker, have just read. *[Interruption.]* Some of us have some respect for parliamentary procedures. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This could be helpful to me.

Mr. Faulds: Indeed, Sir.

I intend no reference whatever to any present Member of the House, except to the Leader of the House. A few moments ago, you, Mr. Speaker, said that we could not go back — that was your phrase. I hesitate to correct you, Sir, but the whole of precedent is a matter of going back. You then proceeded, Mr. Speaker, to say that we could not go back to yesterday, but if we are referring to precedent, we must go back to the day before yesterday. You will know, Mr. Speaker, as the House will know, that, on the initiative of the then Leader of the House in 1947, one Garry Allighan was expelled from the House — a little before my time—and in 1954 one Peter Baker was expelled from the House. In those instances the initiative to move expulsion was taken by the Leader of the House. The Leader of the House has quite specific responsibilities in these matters. It is open to him—indeed, it is a duty of his—to move for expulsion when any hon. Member is guilty of activities unbecoming to Members of the House. It would appear that that is the present situation and that it requires the Leader of the House to take some immediate action in the Chamber.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have an important foreign affairs debate—a rare occasion—and a great many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part. If the House wishes to deal with this matter at great length, it can do so, but what the hon. Gentleman has said is not a matter for me. Of course it would be in order for the Leader of the House to do as the hon. Gentleman suggests, but I listened with great care to what the Leader said about this matter at business questions on Thursday. Procedures are clearly laid down for matters of this kind and the hon. Gentleman may take advice upon them and operate them if he so wishes.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are only asking honourably for your guidance, and the guidance that we have had so far seems to place us in deeper confusion than we were at the beginning. It happens that certain Members of Parliament from over the way—*[Interruption.]* It is no good Conservative Members howling abuse and rudeness at us; we honourably want to know. I am sure that if any Opposition Member had made such admissions, the howls from Conservative Members would have everybody wondering what was happening.

Can you, Mr. Speaker, guide us about what we can do about two Conservative Members who have confessed that they have done things that are illegal, putting us in some confusion about what to do about hon. Members

who admit to such things? That is the only matter on which we are asking for guidance, and it is not unreasonable to ask.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me clear up this matter once and for all. I understand that the Director of Public Prosecutions is involved with this matter. The House has clearly established procedures for dealing with such matters, procedures that have been used in the past and that could be used on this occasion. They would be perfectly within the terms of order, and if hon. Members wish to operate them they can do so.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have nothing more to say about that.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has not the Chair been placed in an invidious position and been caught in the crossfire in this debate purely because of the failure of the Government Front Bench to make a statement? Is not the frustration and anger that clearly exist on the Opposition Benches less to do with the action of individuals on the Conservative Benches than with the Government's failure to make a statement on what is clearly a matter of concern to the country? Should not we expect to hear from the Leader of the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is patently not a matter of order for me.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Further to that point of order Mr. Speaker. You have probably seen that I was one of the six signatories to early-day motion 841. I am a little confused by what you say.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Sanctimonious buggers.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am listening carefully to what the hon. Gentleman is saying about early-day motion 841.

Mr. Caborn: I did not quite hear that, Mr. Speaker. Did you ask the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) to withdraw his remark?

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot have a point of order in the middle of a point of order.

Mr. Caborn: The right hon. Gentleman called me a sanctimonious bugger. I am not sanctimonious.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All this takes up a great deal of time. There will be great distress later in the day, when a number of right hon. and hon. Members who are now on their feet will find it difficult to be called because there is not enough time.

Mr. Caborn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I shall not be interrupted again. As you will appreciate, I was one of the signatories to early-day motion 841 and I have been asked about that. I should like to know exactly how we can get that motion debated.

At the weekend, it was put to me in my constituency —I hope that you will hear me out, Mr. Speaker—that the state and a company have been swindled by an elected Member. Yet an old-age pensioner who was caught taking a tin of salmon from a shop in my constituency was committed and charged with the offence there and then. What sort of standards operate in our society? You have a duty, Mr. Speaker, to guide me, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central, about how I can protect the good name of the House. Many allegations are being bandied about and bringing many hon. Members into disrepute. Unless the matter is brought out into the open by your guidance, Mr. Speaker, that will bring the House into disrepute.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker It will save time if I take all the points of order at once; I think that they may be allied.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw your attention to the words used by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) to describe my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn). He made his remarks clearly, and in the hearing of hon. Members on both sides of the House. He called my hon. Friend a sanctimonious bugger. That might be funny to Conservative Members, but it is symptomatic of the way in which the House has been dragged into the pits by the behaviour of Conservative Members. Is it not disgraceful of the Conservative Front Bench to do nothing when they have self-confessed criminals in their ranks? You must do something about that, Mr. Speaker, and ask the right hon. Gentleman to withdraw.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Amery: I am happy to withdraw the second word that I used.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): You will have gathered from the temperature on the Opposition side of the House this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, that there is great frustration about the whole matter. That frustration is shared by those we represent, as many of my hon. Friends have said. We still need clear guidance from you about how to raise the issue. We certainly need a statement from the Leader of the House, who has been dodging the issue and trying to push it under the carpet. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to do what is best for the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already said several times that there are procedures for dealing with such matters. It is not for me to spell them out to hon. Members, because they are long standing and can easily be operated if hon. Members wish to operate them.

All that is required is a motion that is debatable. There are opportunities to debate these matters if the House wants to take them.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Skinner: It is a slight variation on the theme.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr Skinner: When early-day motion 841 was tabled last week in the names of my hon. Friend for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and others, it struck me that it needed to be amended. Accordingly, I went to the Table Office last week with an amendment. It seemed a pretty simple task to amend a motion, and early-day motions can normally

[Mr Skinner]

be amended without a great deal of trouble, but because the motion concerned the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) it seemed that special care had to be taken in deciding whether it could be amended. Hundreds of amendments are tabled, but when I went to the Table Office last week I was told immediately that if there were to be any amendment to early-day motion 841 it would have to be a matter for the Clerks at the Table. I thought that that was fair enough and I did not see why there should be any argument about it. Normally there is no argument about tabling an amendment.

It seems, however, that there are different rules for swindling Tory Members and for those who do not come into that category. When I was in my constituency during the weekend I was asked why I could not get the amendment down. I replied, "It seems"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Skinner: As you will know, Mr. Speaker, I told the Table Office yesterday that I was not satisfied with the decision of the Clerks. I believe that the administration in the House of Commons has double standards and that that has been demonstrated by the stopping of my amendment. I told the Clerks to send it to you, Mr. Speaker, because you are the final arbiter on whether a motion may be amended.

Along with my constituents, I find it incredible that Members can be thrown out of the Chamber for saying during the miners' strike that the judges are Tories—and they were—when fiddling Tory Members become the subject of motions and we find that such motions cannot be amended. I think that my amendment, which drew attention to the activities of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, was appropriate. I stated in the amendment that the Tory party, instead of disowning the hon. Gentleman, should take him to the——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: This is a political issue.

Mr. Speaker: It may be a political issue, but, if it is, it is reprehensible to draw the Chair into the argument. I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to page 382 of "Erskine May", where it states that a notice of motion is

"not a proper subject for debate"

if it is

"tendered in a spirit of mockery."

I am bound by the rules, as everyone is in this place.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we should move on.

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take one more point of order, and it will be that of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

Mr. Cohen: I wish to raise a different point of order, Mr. Speaker, but it relates to the same issue. I agree with the points which have been raised by several of my hon. Friends, but I recognise that you have ruled on them, Mr. Speaker.

Many of my constituents will be concerned about the greed that the hon. Members for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) and for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram) have exhibited. They are concerned also about the cover-up that they think has been going on and the Government's protection of admitted wrongdoers. I wish to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to what happened in the House the other day during the conversation between——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cohen: This is a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is not if the event took place the other day. If the hon. Gentleman's point of order related to something that happened today, it may be in order.

Mr. Cohen: I wish to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to column 117 of *Hansard* and an exchange between my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and yourself. My hon. Friend said that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn had just made a statement that he made multiple applications for British Telecom shares——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman talking about something that happened yesterday?

Mr. Cohen: I am referring you to column 117 of *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Column 117 is a Division list.

Mr. Cohen: My point of order is still relevant, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to do something of which the entire House would disapprove. He is attempting to raise on a point of order something which happened last week, presumably, and not yesterday. I have been tolerant in taking points of order——

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cohen: I am not challenging your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to deal with a matter which did not arise yesterday, or to perpetuate what is clearly becoming a debate between Back Benchers and the Chair on a day when there is enormous pressure on Back Benchers on both sides of the House to take part in an important debate.

Mr. Cohen: Members' interests have been raised in points of order today, Mr. Speaker: Members' interests are involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has suggested that the greedy share application in which at least £36,000 has been raked off should feature in the Register of Members' Interests. You have not taken up this issue, Mr. Speaker, and it has not been covered.

Mr. Speaker: Very well, I shall deal with it now. The hon. Gentleman knows that shareholdings below a certain proportion do not have to be disclosed in the Register of Members' Interests. Furthermore, he is aware, as is the whole House, that the issue is already under investigation by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

TERRITORIAL SEA BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Territorial Sea Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Sheep and Goats (Removal to Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Local Government (Supply of Goods and Services)

4.8 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prevent local councils discriminating against private companies who supply goods and contracting services, and for related matters.

I shall detain the House for only a short time. My Bill is designed to require local councils to allow private contractors the unfettered right to tender for the supply of goods and services, to stop them creating companies of convenience as a way round the Government's economic policy, and to amend an anomaly in the General Rate Act 1967.

The Bill will prevent a serious and growing abuse of purchasing power by some local councils. It is the practice of those councils to try to impose political conditions on private businesses that have nothing to do with their ability to provide goods and services. These councils seek to influence policy and gain publicity in areas such as defence, foreign affairs and employment, subjects that should properly be decided by the House and not by the lethal Left in control of councils such as Brent, Haringey, Lambeth and Newham, whose primary duty it is to provide their ratepayers with the highest standard of services at the lowest possible cost. It is not for them to impose their own interpretation of the law, but simply to administer it.

Over recent years the number of local authorities imposing onerous or irrelevant conditions on private businesses has been growing at an alarming rate. Such impositions range from the requirement to fill in long and detailed questionnaires which are wholly irrelevant to the firms' commercial and technical abilities to outright bans on firms for purely party political dogmatic reasons.

There are now over 40 councils which introduce overtly political considerations at some stage of their contractual process. Labour-controlled Tameside asks potential suppliers whether they make donations to political parties, the tacit threat being that if they subscribe to any party other than its own they will not be included on, or will be removed from, the tender lists. The London borough of Newham asks for information as to whether any of the firms or directors of the firms are freemasons. That is wholly irrelevant to the goods and services the firm is asked to provide. Links with South Africa, work at defence establishments such as Molesworth and Greenham common and the use of self-employed labour are other common areas of lethal Left local interference.

Self-employment is a dynamic sector of our economy. It has been responsible for a major part of the growth of the labour force in recent years and is the specific reason for the welcome and continuing reduction of unemployment. Those local councils which seek to ban this practice attack the freedom of the individual to sell his or her labour wherever they choose within the law. They would hamper economic flexibility and force more people into the black economy or, more sadly, out of work altogether.

My Bill in no way affects a local council's right not to use a contractor on the grounds of incompetence nor would it impair its statutory duties under existing legislation such as health and safety legislation and the Race Relations Act 1968. I recognise that in some areas of high unemployment a percentage of workers living

[Mr. John Heddle]

locally should be employed locally and my Bill will make provision for that. However, it will also prevent the abuse of power by local councils which seek to interfere on issues that are, quite simply, none of their business. It will eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape, it will enhance freedom, encourage business enterprise and stimulate employment.

The second purpose of my Bill is to stop councils from creating companies of convenience, controlled by the same council buying its assets and leasing them back to it simply to evade the Government's financial guidelines. By way of illustration, I shall explain what is happening in Manchester city council. A total of 32 buildings owned by the council are to be sold to an investment company, also owned by the council. That company will lease the buildings back to the council. The money to buy the properties will be borrowed from a number of banks by a company controlled by the council called the Manchester Mortgage Corporation. Among the buildings affected are the central library, the central art gallery and a shopping centre in a suburb of the constituency of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris).

The buildings are valued altogether at £200 million. The Manchester Mortgage Corporation will hand the £200 million to the council in exchange for a 75-year lease on the 32 properties. The council will put the money into its bank account to earn £15 million a year interest. As soon as the Manchester Mortgage Corporation gains the leases for the properties it will lease them back to the council for 20 years, less one day. Interest will not be paid for the first two years. The poor ratepayers will have to pick up the tab.

Manchester city council is seeking to borrow against its capital assets to finance its day-to-day expenditure. That is illegal. However, that cunning piece of creative accounting is an attempt to achieve a way round the law be redefining the word "capital". My Bill would put an end to that.

The third purpose of the Bill is to amend section 34 of the General Rate Act 1967, which denies local town councils the right to receive direct rateable benefit from energy installations such as power stations. I have a power station in Rugeley in my constituency of Mid-Staffordshire and my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), who sits on the Government Front Bench, has Sizewell A within his constituency and will soon have Sizewell B. Perhaps I can illustrate the point by referring the House to the Suffolk context. The recently published Layfield report said that one of the matters raised by local interests was the question of the financial benefit the locality could expect to derive from the CEGB in the event of Sizewell B being constructed. Suggestions had been made that the board should finance directly the provision of local amenities such as a swimming pool, sports centre and so on. Concern had been expressed that, although the rates that would be paid to Suffolk coastal district by the board would hugely increase in the event of Sizewell B being built, none or virtually none of this increased revenue would accrue to the benefit of local council finances because there would be a commensurate reduction in the rate support grant to the district council.

My Bill would seek to amend that anomaly. That anomaly does not apply to other public sector buildings such as those owned by British Telecom but simply to energy installations. The CEGB has already drawn that point to the attention of my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Energy and I sincerely hope that, if the House approves my Bill, my right hon. Friends in those Departments will seek to amend the Act.

The most important aspect of the Bill is to assist the ratepayers in Manchester and in those 40 and growing other local authorities where lethal Left-wing councillors are seeking to discriminate against their day-to-day interests in pursuit of party political dogmatic objectives that have absolutely nothing to do with their functions and their duties to the ratepayer.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Banks: Yes, Sir.

Trying to secure a rational debate on a subject such as contract compliance is rather like going downstairs to advocate temperance in the Strangers' Bar. We have just heard a speech from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) which is typical of the graceless and mean-spirited approach that one is now getting from the Conservative party. In fact, it is typical of the hon. Gentleman himself.

This Bill is about contract compliance. The hon. Gentleman would like to ban all forms of contract compliance and in that he will find several supporters on his own Front Bench, including the present Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): How does the hon. Gentleman know?

Mr. Banks: I know because the right hon. Gentleman said so and I must assume that on that occasion he was telling the truth.

Contract compliance is not some alien doctrine. Indeed, the House of Commons passed a fair wages resolution, which is contract compliance, as did the London county council, the forerunner of the Greater London council, in 1891. Even the Government, who are attempting to reduce Britain to a state of economic anarchy, are still prepared to retain certain residual elements of contract compliance in the contracts they issue.

The GLC's work on contract compliance was based on the American model. It was not something imported from Moscow, as the newspapers were suggesting, but was based on the experiences that started in the United States under President Roosevelt when he signed Executive Order 8802 in June 1941. It took the race riots in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s for teeth to be put into that policy and it was President Kennedy who did that with Executive Order 10925 when the phrase "affirmative action" first appeared in the United States. It is now used to describe the generality of all programmes, policies or activities aimed at eliminating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. It is working in the United States and it could work here.

President Reagan, rather like the Prime Minister, was trying to deregulate across the board. He did not like, and no doubt still does not like, affirmative action and contract compliance, so an onslaught was launched on the concept. However, in the end Reagan was defeated, not just by the

civil rights groups but by the American equivalent of the CBI, the National Association of Manufacturers, which said that it did not want to see affirmative action removed. The White House has now admitted defeated, and affirmative action remains. However, at a time when President Reagan has admitted defeat, the Government are prepared to fight the battle again. I can only hope that they meet with the same fate.

In this country, there is a need for contract compliance. The rate of unemployment among young blacks is twice as high as that among young whites, and the Policy Studies Institute estimates that at least one third of all employers discriminate against black applicants at the point of recruitment. Women's earnings as a proportion of men's earnings remain at about 73 to 74 per cent., slightly lower than their high in 1975 at 75·5 per cent. Sexual segregation remains a dominant characteristic of the United Kingdom labour force.

In respect of disabled people, a recent study estimated that an able-bodied applicant was 1·6 per cent. more likely to receive a positive response from an employer than a disabled applicant with equal qualifications. Bringing a court case for failing to meet the 3 per cent. quota established under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 is unheard of. This quota is honoured more in the breach than in the observance by the Government, but when a borough such as Lambeth decides to try to meet the provisions of the 1944 Act it is attacked by the vermin in Fleet street and derided. A number of local authorities are attempting to ensure good employment practices with the employers and contractors with whom they have business. Whatever else one says, given the fact that about 80 per cent. of employment is now in the private sector, it is only by attempting to influence policies within the private sector that one can see these good employment practices pursued. Contract compliance offers just such a way.

We do not need a Bill like this. I know, whatever the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire might have said, what his real intentions are, because he has stated them here on more than one occasion during local government debates. We want a Government-backed scheme of contract compliance along the United States model. Without it, all the protestations by Ministers about deploring discrimination in employment will remain a massive exercise in calculated hypocrisy. Many local authorities are trying to do something positive and deserve to be defended in their actions by the House and not subjected to this cheapjack little Bill at the fag-end of this Government. I ask the House to reject it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Heddle, Mr. Ian Gow, Sir John Page, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. John Watts, Mr. Malcolm Thornton, Mr. Robert Key, Mr. Eric Cockeram and Mr. John Powley.

Local Government (Supply of Goods and Services)

Mr. John Heddle accordingly presented a Bill to prevent local councils discriminating against private companies who supply goods and contracting services, and for related matters: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 June and to be printed. [Bill 134.]

Foreign Affairs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before we start the debate, I point out that we were late in starting, for reasons that the House understands. As no fewer than 28 Back Benchers wish to take part in the debate, I appeal for brief contributions.

4.25 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): It is five months since we last had a full foreign affairs debate, and it is clear that the main event for United Kingdom foreign policy during that period was the visit last week by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself to Moscow. It was the high point — to be precise, the high point so far — of this Government's sustained determination to achieve practical improvements in East-West relations. That has long been a central foreign policy objective of the Government. The House may recall that, in the corresponding debate in March 1984, I emphasised that we should try to break down years of mutual mistrust by talking to the Russians from a position of strength and confidence, but I warned them that we should be ready for the long haul. This is in no sense a short-term policy, and, as last week's visit showed, it produces results.

The House has already heard from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a full account of her talks. I am not today proposing to go over the same ground. Nor can I anticipate all the issues that hon. Members may raise later in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), the Minister of State, will try to deal with some of them when winding up. However, few aspects of international affairs are not affected in one way or another by the East-West relationship, and I propose for the most part to consider matters in that context.

I begin by recording my view that Mr. Gorbachev's arrival at the top of the Soviet leadership has been a major event of real and lasting significance, nationally and internationally. Already, his presence in the Kremlin is having a manifest impact on life and government in the Soviet Union. The new Soviet leadership has brought to its system a long-overdue dose of energy and imagination, fuelled by an increasingly clear realisation that its system has been stagnating.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I made plain both during and after our stay in the Soviet Union that we warmly welcome the attempt by Mr. Gorbachev to reform the Soviet system. Mr. Gorbachev sees the need for that, but inevitably he sees the causes of his country's problems differently. It hardly needs saying that he is no Social Democrat. Probably the authority whom he cites most often is Lenin. He certainly does not intend to abandon the Communist system. On the contrary, he believes that it can and must be made to work better.

Characteristically, Mr. Gorbachev opened his speech at the Kremlin banquet with a rosy account of the superiority of the Socialist system, so we should not make any mistake on that account. That is what he sincerely believes. However, the need for reform is obvious. Some 70 years after the revolution, Muscovites are still obliged to stand queueing not for luxuries but for basic foodstuffs, household goods and other things, the availability of which we have long taken for granted.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am grateful for the opportunity to pay tribute to the success of the visit. Is there not a danger, in trying to persuade the Soviet Union to move in certain important directions on human rights and other similar matters by too close a linkage with disarmament, that that linkage will be the death of international diplomacy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises an important point to which I shall refer at a number of stages in my speech. I emphasise that only one linkage is inescapable and that is the extent to which a Government such as that of the Soviet Union fulfil their obligations — to their own people or internationally — in respect of such matters as human rights. That is bound to fortify — or not, as the case may be — confidence in their reliability in other respects. One cannot escape that, and what is true of an individual is true of a Government also.

The features of the Soviet Union to which I referred — chronic inefficiency and bad management — are not confined to that country. Other countries in the COMECON group are in a similar plight. The people of Poland and Romania, for example, are suffering real hardship. Hungary has managed its affairs a good deal more efficiently. I was able to see that for myself on a recent visit. But even they now face a serious foreign debt problem. They are understandably keen to expand their trade with Western Europe, and I hope that the European Community will shortly be able to finalise its mandate for negotiating a trade and co-operation agreement with Hungary.

After a series of journeys to the countries of the Socialist bloc — it is not for me to deny them that description — one must be struck by their utter failure to bring prosperity to their people. The contrast with Western Europe could hardly be greater. The Communist countries face the difficulties of managing failure, while we face, essentially, the difficulties of managing success. If Opposition Members wish to challenge that general proposition, they are welcome to change places with Soviet citizens whenever they wish.

The framework provided by the European Community has brought to Western Europe a period of unprecedented peace and unprecedented prosperity. We ended our period of presidency of the Community in December with the Community making good progress towards the vital objective of a single market in which goods, services and people move about freely. We are continuing to give priority to the liberalisation of the key transport sector — the removal of restrictions on movement by air, sea and land. Our presidency also saw the largest step so far towards curbing the excesses of the common agricultural policy.

Beyond the Community, the world's trading system as a whole certainly faces real problems. As the House knows, protectionist pressures have been gaining ground in response to persistent imbalances between the economies of the major countries. One of the most serious imbalances is with Japan. It must be said again that the Japanese cannot continue to enjoy a free run in Europe without themselves allowing in return free access to their own markets. The Community has set in hand an action programme for particular sectors: the House knows what they are. When I met my European colleagues last weekend, I informed them of the powers that we are taking under the new Financial Services Act, and they readily agreed to my proposal that we should ask Community trade experts to consider, as a matter of urgency, further specific measures.

In regard to Cable and Wireless, the Japanese Government have been left in no doubt of the strength of British views. The company is still in negotiation with the Japanese authorities, and no decisions have yet been made.

Our objective is not to mount a trade war, still less to close markets. It is to secure the opening of those markets. The Japanese share with the rest of the world a responsibility for promoting those objectives.

The issues of free trade and technology have taken us some way from Mr. Gorbachev. Yet, curiously, the improvements that he wants to introduce in the Soviet Union echo — consciously or unconsciously — the basic themes of economic life in the West: personal incentives and responsibility, new scope for small-scale entrepreneurial activity, more freedom for individual farmers, increased reliance on market forces, and so forth. Those are the messages that are coming through from the Soviet system, based on the example of the West.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Is not the real point that Socialism is an idea whose time has come and gone?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend puts his point with characteristic lucidity and compactness.

It can be seen that Mr. Gorbachev's attempts to glean the practical benefits of restructuring and openness within the Soviet Union have political as well as economic implications, and those implications are international as well. We must ask, in that broader context, whether glasnost — openness — is welcome to the West, and I believe that the answer must be yes. I believe that a Soviet Union that is internally more open and flexible should be an easier and more trustworthy international partner. Certainly, we are ready to put the sincerity of the Soviet leadership to the test in different contexts. There is room for modest encouragement in the fact that the Soviet Union appears to be re-examining its approach to many international issues. Of course, the defence and advancement of Soviet interests remains the overriding priority, but there are some signs that the Russians may now be becoming more objective in their approach to at least some major issues.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I welcome the changes in Russia. I also appreciate the great personal freedoms and liberties that we have in this country, which do not exist in the Soviet Union. But when the Prime Minister was talking to the Soviet leader and lecturing him about human rights, did not Mr. Gorbachev take the opportunity to ask a question that I should have thought was very appropriate — whether the Prime Minister had lectured the King of Saudi Arabia, when he was here a week earlier, about human rights in his country? Should not human rights apply everywhere? We should not simply lecture the Soviets about them.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the whole House would strive to see the achievement of human rights as widely as possible. However, none of that can allow us to escape from the central proposition that this is a question of fundamental importance in our relations with the Soviet Union, and to the relations of many people who wish for freedom to leave that country.

Mr. Winnick: But not in South Africa or Chile.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The world is full of a wide range of standards in the matter, but it is the Soviet Union that I am discussing now. The Soviet Union is one country that has fallen far behind the standards that it has set for itself.

If the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) can stand it, I shall move on to a less tendentious point on a different topic. Mr. Shevardnadze and I found a great deal in common when we analysed the implications of the disastrous war between Iran and Iraq. We agreed that it was in everyone's interests for the senseless carnage involved in that conflict to be brought to an end. Sadly, however, neither of us saw any great prospect of that happening soon. As permanent members of the Security Council, we both undertook to encourage and sustain the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to end the conflict, and we agreed to exchange information on the situation in the Gulf of Hormuz.

British policy is clear. We shall continue to stand for freedom of navigation in the gulf. The House knows that there has been an increase in the time that the ships of the Armilla patrol spend there. That is welcome to our friends in the area, including King Fahd, who we were glad to welcome on a highly successful state visit here two weeks ago.

In my talks in Moscow, there was also a measure of agreement on the central Arab-Israel question. We agreed that progress towards negotiations was urgently needed, and that an international conference could be helpful. But more preparatory work is needed, and we shall look forward to discussing that, among other matters, with King Hussein this week. I was encouraged by Mr. Shevardnadze's acknowledgement that contacts between the Soviet Union and Israel could have a role to play: the easing of restrictions on the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union—a central question of human rights—would help. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I pressed them to speed up that process.

The tragic consequences of 40 years of hostility between Israel and the Arab states are all too visible. There is widespread concern in the House about the appalling conditions now experienced by those still trapped in the Palestinian camps in Beirut. We have just made available over £500,000 to the International Red Cross and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for relief work in Lebanon. I explained to Mr. Shevardnadze our strong support for UNIFIL as a force for stability in southern Lebanon. I welcome the fact that the Russians now support it, and pressed them to demonstrate that support by paying their arrears of contributions.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): May I ask the Foreign Secretary two questions? First, is he aware that a personal threat has been made against the life of Dr. Pauline Cutting by the Amal forces in Beirut? What efforts are the British Government making to ensure that Dr. Cutting will be able to leave Bourj-al-Barajneh when she wishes to? Secondly, given that the EEC Foreign Ministers, back in May 1980, identified the West Bank as a central problem, and also identified the need for the Palestinians and the Israelis to accept each other's rights to exist, will the Foreign Secretary tell us what form he envisages the Palestinian delegation in any international conference taking? Will it be a PLO delegation, a delegation of Palestinian personalities approved by the PLO, or an Arab delegation containing representatives of the PLO?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman raises two points. I am not aware of the specific threat to which he referred in his first point. However, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office will look into the matter further before he winds up the debate. The hon. Gentleman's second point is at the heart of how to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute, and the question is under discussion yet again in a number of places. It formed the background to our talks in Belgium at the weekend, and it is sustaining our support for progress towards the holding of a conference and our support for the extremely careful work that will be necessary to try to identify the right composition of the delegation. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to give a compact answer to the most difficult question of all in this most difficult area.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman, for whom I have great regard for his many successes in a Government who have not always understood some of the problems, must be aware that there is a strategic alliance between Israel and America that puts America out of court to dictate the terms of the composition of any delegation, or about which proposals may be made. Is it not entirely unreasonable that Israel, very much a party to this dispute, and America, with that highly effective political lobby, should be able to lay down regulations as to whom the Palestinian delegation should consist of? There is general acceptance throughout the world that the PLO is the representative of the Palestinians. Why do the British Government not have the guts and the gumption to say so?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman concluded his benign question with a rather sharper shaft of criticism.

Mr. Faulds: That does not lessen my affection.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am most grateful for that. The fact is that no participant or principally interested party can claim to dictate the composition of the final deputation. There are many different moves and decisions to be taken, and many factions could shift their position which would lead to a conclusion that rendered further progress impossible. For example, the Palestine National Council is meeting later this month. If it were to take a decision that was exclusive in a certain direction, that would make it extremely difficult to put together the deputation that in the end would be necessary.

The position that we adopt when we talk to the Soviet Union, the Palestinians, Israel or the United States is that we must endeavour to move towards common ground in the composition of that deputation rather than the reverse. The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) could detain the House for many hours on this fascinating subject, but I want to say just one thing more about the Lebanon.

I cannot leave that question without saying a word about the British citizens who are held there. We are continuing to do all that we can to help to secure the release of Mr. Terry Waite and the others. I am afraid that I have no fresh news to give to the House about these matters. We are in close contact with all their families, as well as with the Archbishop of Canterbury and his staff.

Our policy remains firm. We shall certainly not make substantive concessions to terrorists and hostage-takers. It remains true that to do so would simply fuel their

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malevolent ambitions. The middle east will remain on our agenda for talks with the Russians. It has featured in all my four meetings with Mr. Shevardnadze in the last nine months. I have accepted another invitation to meet him in Moscow again later this year.

There are many issues on which we do not agree. One is Afghanistan. The Prime Minister and I stressed last week that positive Soviet moves to end the occupation would change the way that the world assesses Soviet intentions in other areas. The Russians should respect world opinion, withdraw their troops and allow the Afghan people to determine their own future in freedom. As part of any settlement, more than 4 million refugees must be allowed to return to their own country.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said last week in the House, the Russians would clearly like to withdraw from Afghanistan but do not know how best to go about it. Be that as it may, so long as Soviet troops remain on Afghan soil we must all draw our own conclusions about Soviet claims to be uniquely motivated by the search for peace.

The Prime Minister and I have been glad of the chance to discuss this and other issues with our friends from Pakistan on their visit to Britain this week. The whole House has welcomed the progress that has been made in restoring democratic government to Pakistan. We welcome Prime Minister Junejo as well as my distinguished colleague, Yaqub Khan. We applaud their determination to shoulder the burden that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan has placed on their country, and we extend our sympathy to those who have suffered death and injury in recent air attacks on Pakistan.

The House also knows that we have been discussing with the Government of India the improvement of extradition arrangements, with special provision for crimes of terrorism. I understand the concerns of some constituents of hon. Members, including those in the Sikh community in this country. I assure them that the proposed new arrangements will, of course, retain the usual humanitarian safeguards, but they will also reflect the joint determination of Britain and India to stand firm against terrorism. The Indian Government have themselves suffered grievously from this scourge. They need be in no doubt about the firmness of Her Majesty's Government's commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of India.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is it my hon. and learned Friend's impression that the Government of India remain the only obstacle to the return, which we would welcome, of Pakistan to the Commonwealth?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That raises a much wider question. I should certainly not form the view that my hon. Friend has offered. The question of Pakistan's return to the Commonwealth would be a matter for the members of the Commonwealth as a whole, and it would have to be discussed on that basis. My hon. Friend should certainly not keep to the conclusion that he has offered on that question.

To return to my central theme of East-West relations, Mr. Gorbachev has made very clear his belief that it is in the interests of the Soviet Union that the military arsenals of both East and West should be significantly reduced. Certainly he appears to realise the enormous strain that ever-increasing Soviet military expenditure places on the Soviet economy, and he is worried about the potential military applications of the West's technological ability. He offers plain views on the best way to bring about cuts in nuclear and other weapons. Nobody should be surprised that our views are not identical, but that did not stop us last week from tackling head-on the key questions: can we negotiate arms reductions on terms that both sides accept, and how should we set about achieving those reductions? Once both sides see that their vital interests can be furthered by agreement in these areas, I believe that patient negotiation can and will bring results. That analysis has been the basis of this Government's long term policy for East-West relations.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, in just a second.

We saw solid results last September in Stockholm—the first major East-West agreement on security issues for years.

Mr. Dalyell: If the Zircon satellite were of such vital technological interest, why was it that, when it was told, the Foreign Office did not act on the information of Professor Sir Ronald Mason and Sir Frank Cooper? Will the Foreign Secretary clear up why the Foreign Office did not do that straight away? Was it not a dereliction of duty not to do so?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is always fascinating to have an insight into the way in which the hon. Gentleman's mind works and to notice that a reference to a vital technological interest in this much broader context immediately presses the button marked "Zircon". The hon. Gentleman can no doubt seek an answer to that question if he catches your eye during the debate, Mr. Speaker. I do not propose to be distracted and to go down that path at the moment.

I was saying that the Stockholm agreement was and should be noted as the first major East-West agreement on security issues for years. In other words, the policy that I have outlined is a policy that has been shown to work—a policy that involves proceedings step by step, cautiously but hopefully. I believe that we can now hope for progress. In particular, we wish to see the total elimination of longer-range intermediate nuclear forces in Europe.

The zero-zero option was a NATO proposal. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in Moscow, we are fully committed to allowing an INF agreement on that basis. Mr. Gorbachev has finally accepted it but, as NATO has always recognised, it would be senseless to remove one whole category of devastating weapons while handing to the Russians a blank cheque for others. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Mr. Gorbachev agreed in Moscow on three things: strict verification, constraints on shorter-range missiles and immediate follow-on negotiations to deal with such systems more fully.

One area in which there remains a potentially serious disagreement is that of the right to match Soviet shorter-range intermediate nuclear force deployments. We see no reason why the West should accept a Soviet monopoly. But we are moving forward and if we are able to reach a satisfactory INF agreement that should enhance the

prospects of progress in three other important areas: a 50 per cent. cut in strategic weapons, total worldwide elimination of chemical weapons, and negotiations to reduce conventional forces.

Our visit to Moscow has shown the truth of what everybody sensible has known all along, that straight talking does produce dividends. Never before has any Soviet leader heard such a detailed account of Western positions on arms control issues and of where we see scope for progress. Never before have a Western and a Soviet leader had such a long and frank exchange on the rights and wrongs of their respective political systems.

This offers an astonishing contrast to the performance of the Labour party. The Prime Minister and I went to Moscow seeking to establish with the Soviet Union an effective, honest working relationship. The Leader of the Opposition and the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) went to Washington in search of a cover-up for their defence policy. Before he left for Washington the right hon. Member for Leeds, East proclaimed:

"Our policies are much the same as President Reagan's."

It would be extremely interesting to know whether that came as more of a surprise to members of the Opposition than it must have to President Reagan. Yet after the meeting in Washington the Leader of the Opposition was at pains to deny that he had even mentioned to President Reagan two of the central planks of Labour defence policy: unilateral nuclear disarmament and the removal of United States nuclear forces from Britain. It must be said in his favour that perhaps he did not have the time to do so.

Far from going to the White House to explain Labour policies, the right hon. Gentlemen hoped that their visit would serve to conceal them. Theirs was an enterprise which did not succeed and which did not deserve to succeed. I noticed that on his return the right hon. Member for Leeds, East said rather plaintively on television that

"Mr. Gorbachev was more critical of Mrs. Thatcher than Mr. Reagan had been of Labour."

I see that the right hon. Gentleman endorses those words. I am not sure whether he was complaining or boasting, but the fact that he was able to make an observation of such manifest confusion demonstrates more clearly than anything else the total confusion in the minds of leaders of the Opposition as to whose side they are really meant to be on. This climax of confusion coincided with the drafting in, as I understand it, of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East to organise a foreign policy success for the Leader of the Opposition. It must be said that that is not a very easy task.

There is a serious side to all this. Only a couple of weeks ago the Labour party issued a glossy policy pamphlet called "Europe: the new detente". It is a document riddled with anti-Americanism which proposes breaking up the common Western approach to the Helsinki agreement. It advocates greater tolerance of totalitarian systems and amounts to a charter for the break-up of NATO and a blueprint for a neutral Europe.

By contrast with that, we have not compromised vital national interests. We have not swallowed alluring proposals that would have weakened our security and the security of the West as a whole. We have shown the world that confident and determined diplomacy gets results. We and the Western Alliance can take satisfaction in having stuck to policies to which Mr. Gorbachev now finds it possible to respond.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House last week, our stay in Moscow gave a welcome boost to Anglo-Soviet trade. It enabled us to bring to a conclusion bilateral work which has been going on for many months on three intergovernmental agreements and a memorandum of understanding. The documents that I signed dealt with such matters as co-operation on space research, upgrading the hotline between London and Moscow, the siting of new embassies here and in Moscow, school exchanges, an end to jamming of broadcasts and more exchanges of journalists and television programmes.

We made it clear in Moscow that the Soviet Union's readiness to live up to its Helsinki commitments, particularly those on human rights — and this is the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) — inevitably affected Western readiness to trust the Soviet Union in other areas.

We raised well over 100 individual human rights cases with the Soviet leadership. It undertook to look into those cases. There has been some progress in this area, which we should acknowledge, but it is still far from enough. The changes that are taking place are exemplified by the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I were able to meet at the British embassy such people as Dr. Sakharov and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Begun. I found those occasions very poignant. Here I was meeting people in Moscow whose names I had myself raised time and time again with the Soviet leadership. Now they were free at last, after years of persecution, persecution simply because they believe in the rights and freedoms which we enjoy and take for granted. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is not able to join the whole House in concluding that it is changes of this kind that publicly remind Governments that East-West relations are about much more than the acronyms of arms control and that the human dimension —people and their lives and liberty—remains absolutely central.

So, too, is the continuing wider mistrust, which we are only just commencing to break down. So, too, is the huge armoury of weapons, chemical and conventional as well as nuclear, which the Soviet Union and its allies continue to deploy in offensive formation against the peoples of western Europe. We do not say that those weapons prove an intention to attack, but they represent a clear threat; they demonstrate continuing suspicion and hostility towards the outside world.

If Mr. Gorbachev, with his insight and his leadership, can at long last help us to start breaking down these barriers he will indeed have made a mark on history. It must be said that the visit of my right hon. Friend to Moscow was in itself a significant step forward. It is greater understanding between the super-powers that will bring greater security to the world, and my right hon. Friend has made a historic contribution to this.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I notice that my right hon. and learned Friend is coming to the end of his statement and I want to deflect him for one moment from his central theme to NATO and relations between Greece and Turkey. He was in Moscow during the dispute in the Aegean. Did he raise with Mr. Shevardnadze whether the Soviet Union accepts the Aegean as international waters? On a broader point, how does he see present relations between Greece and Turkey

[Mr. Richard Hickmet]

affecting NATO and what initiatives can and should Her Majesty's Government consider for bringing those two countries closer together?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is the kind of point that I expect from my hon. Friend. I know that it is a matter in which he takes a serious interest. It may be a trailer of the speech that I hope he will be making, but if not my hon. Friend will have an opportunity of dealing with it later on.

Throughout all these contacts we have kept our allies closely informed. Over the weekend, as the House knows, I had the opportunity of a full discussion with Community colleagues in Belgium. On Thursday of this week I shall go to Washington for another of my regular meetings with Secretary of State George Shultz, whom I last met in January. I shall take the opportunity to brief him fully on our talks in Moscow prior to his own visit there next week.

We shall also, of course, discuss the full range of disarmament and regional questions. I shall make it clear that we should like to see his talks in Moscow make progress and that he goes with our good wishes, but that we, like the United States and the rest of our allies, are clear that it must be on a basis which does not compromise the security of the West.

International events as they unfold underline more and more the relevance and effectiveness of this Government's policies on arms control and East-West affairs. Nothing has highlighted the irrelevance and ineffectiveness of the polices of the Opposition quite so starkly as the events of the last week. The unilateralist party finds itself like a dinosaur, stranded in a changed world, stranded without a future, but still, I fear, with a considerable capacity for wreaking havoc. For years now the Opposition have attempted to portray Her Majesty's Government as aggressive, inflexible and a threat to peace. But in this, as in so many other respects, they have been proved totally and absolutely wrong.

We welcome the changes that Mr. Gorbachev is trying to introduce, but it is idle to expect the iron curtain to melt away overnight. The Soviet Union represents a powerful challenge to the West, determined to uphold the Communist system at home and to advance its influence abroad. We can do business with the Soviet Union, but only if the West stays united and only if we have serious policies, pursued in a serious way by serious leaders. That is what the Government have offered for the last eight years, and intend to continue to offer for a number of years to come.

5 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): First, let me say that we on this side of the House welcome greatly this debate, delayed as it has been, and delayed even further this afternoon. I regret that I shall have to leave for a visit to the far east before it is concluded — *[Interruption.]* I shall be working for Britain.

Let me start by offering the Foreign Secretary sympathy. He was ignored in Russia and he was snubbed in Europe, but I think that he was right to give a jaunty welcome to the miracle of Moscow, by which I mean the conversion of the Prime Minister to a rational view of the Soviet Union which the Foreign Secretary has been urging on her, his briefers tell us, at least since 1983. For that achievement I forgive him for allowing his electoral preoccupations to entangle him in a web of metaphor at the end of his speech, which left us perplexed about what he was trying to get at.

The Foreign Secretary was right, as was the Prime Minister last week, in telling us that East-West relations are the key to the stability and peace of the world. He was right to endorse the Prime Minister's view that we now stand at a historic turning point in East-West affairs and that, provided we are patient and deal with the problems step by step, we may make quite rapid progress towards improving the position.

I am bound to remind the House that the biggest obstacle to progress over the last eight years has been the Prime Minister's personal hatred of the Soviet Union. The Foreign Secretary will recall the outburst of megaphone diplomacy, as his predecessor described it, by the Prime Minister in October 1983 when she described the Soviet system as

"a modern version of the early tyrannies of history — its creed barren of conscience, immune to promptings of good and evil."

Only a few weeks ago her parliamentary private secretary told a doubting electorate somewhere in Yorkshire that if Britain cancelled the Trident programme it would be transformed into a nightmare society, an East European style people's democracy with Soviet bases targeting missiles at the United States of America.

Mr. David Watt, whose recent tragic death all of us on both sides of the House deplore, reported recently in *The Times* that the Prime Minister had held a seminar at Chequers on change in the Soviet Union. After she had been told by experts from the United States and Britain of the nature of the changes under way, she permitted herself an astonishing outburst in which she shrieked:

"Socialism is an unmitigated evil. They never change."

The Prime Minister produced a trailer for her visit to Moscow in that hair-raising speech at Torquay which was fiercely criticised by her Soviet hosts. Even as her aircraft was landing at Moscow airport she told the journalists aboard that Russia could not be trusted to keep any disarmament agreement if it put people in prison for their religious or political views. She said that as long as it did so it would be a danger to other countries. That remark came from the main protector in the world of the apartheid regime in South Africa who had just spent a week in London paying obsequious court to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

The Prime Minister stuck to the same line in her speech at the Kremlin banquet and was rapped over the knuckles by Mr. Gorbachev for her pains. We remember the headlines — "Icy Gorbachev flays Thatcher". No, I am sorry; such a headline is applied only to what the Leader of the Opposition does not do in Washington and not to what the Prime Minister does in Moscow. Yet 24 hours after making that speech, for which she was immediately castigated by the Soviet leader, everything had changed. I watched the interview she had with Mr. Wheeler. She was melting and dewy-eyed. She praised Gorbachev to the skies as a man of "fantastic courage", "utterly outstanding and reasonable", who could be trusted implicitly to carry out any promise he made.

I have been wondering ever since what produced this miraculous conversion. Was it those 12 hours of philosophical debate? The discussion lasted for 12 hours because every now and then Mr. Gorbachev actually succeeded in getting a word in, and there are signs that at

some stages she actually listened to what he said. Later, the Soviet spokesman, Mr. Gerasimov, talked of a chemistry between them. If the press reports are right, I suspect that the chemistry was a love potion.

A *Daily Mail* reporter wrote while she was there:

"It is possible that only a woman, and perhaps only this woman, would have the effrontery or audacity to use her sex as a weapon quite ruthlessly. But she turned it on like an old time Hollywood film star—and they loved it."

Let me quote from another great national newspaper:.

"The Spring-like pictures also show why Mrs. Thatcher refused to let her husband Denis accompany her on this historic visit. For photographer Ken George and I witnessed the Prime Minister strolling arm-in-arm with Mr. Gorbachev, pausing to kiss and cuddle him—and even tickle him under the chin like some flirty schoolgirl. Romance, April-style, was clearly in the air."

One touch of Venus transformed the iron lady into Lola Montez.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): The right hon. Gentleman is like a small boy at a fair with a bran tub, putting his hand into the bran to see what little parcelled insult he can bring out. He knows very well that the words he has just quoted about tickling under the chin and all that come from a *Daily Mirror* April fools day joke. He knows that is true and he should have the decency to tell the House that.

Mr. Healey: I am surprised that the Minister has the brass to show his face; after all, he told us only yesterday that the Prime Minister should go for a general election today. His disgraceful comments after a recent visit to Moscow led the Soviet official spokesman to describe him as guilty of self-advertisement for election purposes. The House is familiar with his record.

The question we have to ask ourselves is, in this love tryst, as it was described by *The Sunday Times*, who seduced whom? The fact is that Mr. Gorbachev won hands down. He converted her lock, stock and barrel. As Julius Caesar nearly wrote—she came, she saw, he conquered. The Prime Minister got nothing concrete whatever out of her visit — a verdict that was given by *The Sunday Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Financial Times*, *The Independent* and even *The Times* itself. She got nothing for Britain but she got something for her party, because her royal progress—in which she found it impossible to use the singular person pronoun and scattered the word "We" like confetti when referring to her own royal personage — was carefully orchestrated by her Potemkin, Mr. Bernard Ingham, as useful pre-election propaganda. This is how the outside world — United States, Germany, France and Italy—saw the visit.

The psychological transformation that the Prime Minister seems to have undergone has some relevance and will be useful if it lasts. Let me list some of the changes in her position by the end of her visit compared with her position before she left. Only a month ago she said that we could not accept the zero option for medium range missiles without simultaneous cuts in shorter range intermediate missiles. Now she says — and the Foreign Secretary repeated it—that all she is asking for is a freeze pending immediate negotitations.

She distanced herself from President Reagan on three issues. She rejected the idea in her Kremlin speech that the strategic defence initiative could ever provide a complete defence against nuclear weapons. She put forward her own independent proposal for how to deal with the ABM treaty and the strategic defence initiative so as to clear the way for 50 per cent. cuts in strategic nuclear weapons. The American Administration immediately rejected the proposals that she had made. She also put forward proposals for verifying a ban on chemical weapons, which Mr. Gorbachev accepted and the United States so far has rejected. All these are useful and important contributions to East-West relations on which I congratulate the Government and the Foreign Secretary, who has worked so hard for what Mr. Gorbachev achieved so fast.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Educating Rita.

Mr. Healey: Educating Rita, indeed, as my hon. Friend suggests.

The Prime Minister made one point that the Russians must think about much more carefully. So far they have refused to agree on any cuts in strategic nuclear forces unless the United States abandons the strategic defence programme. But, as she pointed out in Moscow, there is no chance of that programme achieving the objectives that President Reagan originally set for it and still believes it can achieve. There is no chance of the American Congress funding it at the level that the President wants, and still less of funding it if it is an obstacle to a strategic nuclear weapons agreement. It is almost certain that the next American President will revise or abandon it as soon as he takes office.

For those reasons, the Soviet Union would be wise to get on now with drafting an agreement for a 50 per cent. cut in strategic nuclear weapons and leave aside the question of SDI for the moment. I know that Mr. Sakharov—and I am delighted that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary were able to see him — has argued a similar case both in the Moscow forum and in a recent interview in *Newsweek*.

The only thing I wish the Prime Minister would do—if she is serious about this shift in her policy—is to join the German Chancellor Herr Kohl in clearly rejecting President Reagan's current attempts to broaden the ABM treaty and to begin a programme of tests in space which would certainly violate it. I hope that she will be emboldened to do so because only last week the joint chiefs in the United States and the head of the Livermore laboratory, which is responsible for conducting the star wars research, both said that such a broadening and such tests in space were unnecessary.

Having given a fair tribute to the Prime Minister's important changes in position, one thing still sticks out like a sore thumb—what the Russians call her nuclearphilia, her obsessive belief that nuclear weapons are both necessary and good. Here, as Mr. Arbatov, the Soviet foreign affairs spokesman, said, she was a good deal less forward looking than President Reagan, who believes that nuclear weapons are immoral and uncivilised and only yesterday described them as "agents of annihilation", and who wants to eliminate them and simultaneously to reduce the gap between the two sides in conventional weapons.

There is one point upon which I hope the Minister will, in reply, comment. The Prime Minister on Thursday, in her statement to the House, said that she thought that President Reagan had dropped his objective of abolishing all strategic nuclear missiles in the next 10 years. Two days after the Prime Minister met President Reagan, Mr. Shultz made a long and impressive speech on American defence and disarmament policy in which he strongly argued in

[Mr. Healey]

favour of the President's proposal to abolish all strategic nuclear missiles and explained precisely why he was in favour of that.

I see from the frantic colloquy between the great men on the Government Front Bench that they are quite disturbed that she should have said that, but they missed it during the helter-skelter rambling to which we were treated at Question Time on Thursday.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: The right hon. Gentleman is contemplating a world where certain nuclear weapons have been removed and he is contemplating the size of conventional forces. Does he believe that any money that is saved from the abolition of the Trident system should be spent on improving our conventional forces, or is he also contemplating a reduction in expenditure on conventional forces?

Mr. Healey: I am grateful for that intervention. My right hon. Friend and I have made clear for many months that we plan to spend all the money saved on Trident and Polaris—which we estimate, after cancellation costs, at about £8,000 million — on strengthening our conventional forces, whom the present Prime Minister is robbing of 30 per cent. of the equipment promised to them over the next few years in order to pay for the Trident programme. I hope that when we come to vote on these matters, perhaps in the Defence Estimates, we can guarantee that we shall have the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) in the Lobby with us.

We must move on the question of the Prime Minister's attachment to nuclear weapons if we are to have any success in the negotiations on the shorter range nuclear missiles, to which the Foreign Secretary referred in his speech. The Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister claim that the Soviets have a superiority of 9:1 in these missiles — a characteristic inflation of the NATO estimate, which is only 6:1 and which has been repeated several times in the past week.

The question I put to the Foreign Secretary is: if it makes sense to eliminate a 3:1 superiority in Soviet medium range nuclear weapons, and if it makes sense—and I agree with the Foreign Secretary that it does—to aim at a global zero option because it is much easier to verify the elimination of all weapons of this category than to verify that only 100 are left on each side, surely the right way to deal with the shorter range nuclear weapons is to aim at a zero option there as well.

I find it difficult to understand why the Prime Minister is aiming to freeze a 9:1 Soviet superiority rather than getting rid of the lot. It is true, as the Foreign Secretary said, that he would like the right for America to match the number of Soviet shorter range missiles. However, the United States has already made it clear that if it matches the Soviets, it is not prepared to pay. The Europeans would have to pay. The German Government have made it clear that they are not prepared to receive an increased number of those missiles at the very moment when medium range missiles are being withdrawn. It is difficult to explain any reasoning behind the Government's attachment to keeping shorter range missiles in Europe where they admit the Russians have an enormous superiority. The only explanation is nuclearphilia. That is a psychological disorder that has been described at some length by Soviet spokesmen since they were exposed to its consequences during the Prime Minister's visit.

In so far as the Government ever attempt a reason for not agreeing to the zero option on shorter range forces, it is the inferiority of the West in conventional weapons. However, the Prime Minister regularly and grossly exaggerates the Soviet superiority. There was an example of that only the other day when the American ambassador told us that the Soviet tank superiority in Europe was 2:1. The Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister keep telling us that it is 3:1. The truth is that on this matter—as in the laughable attempts of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to cost Labour's spending programmes—the Government first think of a number and then double it.

According to the Americans' estimate in terms of armoured division equivalents, the Soviet Warsaw pact superiority to NATO is only 1·2:1. According to NATO, between 10 per cent. and 15 per cent. of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe are intended to garrison the East European countries rather than to take part in any operations against Western Europe.

The most astonishing feature of the Government's position is that they claim that there is a Soviet superiority in conventional weapons and that that is why we need nuclear weapons, but they plan a 30 per cent. cut in the new conventional weapons for the British Army, Navy and Air Force. A tank commander has already resigned his commission because his tanks do not have enough spares even to conduct an exercise, never mind to fight a battle. Similar remarks were made by the recently retired Chief of the Defence Staff, Field Marshal Lord Bramall, in another place the other day.

The best way to match Soviet superiority is not for us to build up — although I told the hon. Member for Bexleyheath that the Labour party plans to build up with the money that we would save on nuclear weapons—but for both sides to build down. In its communiqué following the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Warsaw pact in Moscow a fortnight ago, the Warsaw pact offered a cut of 25 per cent. in the forces on both sides over the next three years and, most importantly, suggested that there should be additional cuts in areas where one side or the other currently has a superiority. We heard nothing from the Foreign Secretary this afternoon about the Government's approach to the negotiations of reductions and achieving equivalents by negotiation in conventional forces in Europe. Indeed, as I understand it, NATO has been wrestling with how to deal with that problem for nearly a year and so far has completely failed to reach agreement within the Alliance.

I predict with a little more confidence than the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), the leader of the Social Democratic party—where is he, by the way?—that it is very likely that Mr. Gorbachev during his visit to Czechoslovakia at the end of this week will announce new Soviet proposals in those areas.

It is common ground between the Foreign Secretary and myself that the advent of Mr. Gorbachev, Glasnost Perestroika and the other new developments in the Soviet Union, present the world with a golden opportunity to make progress on the issues which, for so long, have divided East and West. Indeed, the Prime Minister in an uncharacteristic burst of poetry said in Moscow:

"There is a tide in the affairs of men".

It is amazing what that little touch of Mikhail in the night did for her. The German Foreign Minister rightly said that it would be a crime against history if the West was to reject this opportunity. It would be a tragedy for Britain if our Prime Minister was to reject the opportunity for the sake of buying a new nuclear missile system that Britain cannot afford, which the United States may not provide and which certainly no British Government would ever use.

The Foreign Secretary referred in his opening remarks to the important disagreement between Britain and Japan. He would agree with me that the threat of an incredible act is not a credible deterrent. We had a small example of that when we threatened to shoot our left foot off if we did not get what we wanted from the Japanese by forcing those Japanese firms that we enticed into London at great expense to set up shop in Paris or Frankfurt. The threat to start a nuclear war is a much less credible threat. The threat of suicide is not credible. However, the Prime Minister is not threatening suicide; she is threatening the destruction of civilisation and maybe of mankind. I hope that the wonderful things that we have seen happening to the Prime Minister in Moscow can be carried that little bit further and that she will reflect again on the obstacles that she is placing in the way of the kind of agreement that is now possible with the Soviet Union. I hope that she will join the great majority of mankind who want to get rid of nuclear weapons and establish a new system of security for the whole world.

5.27 pm

Mr. Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire, South-East): What an unworthy speech we have just heard. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) fancies himself as an expert on foreign affairs, but through much of his speech he trivialised matters of the utmost concern to millions of people. He showed, if I may say so, that the time has come for him to make way for a more serious figure.

One of the misfortunes of contemporary British politics is the absence of a broad all-party approach to foreign affairs and defence. The absence of that weakens the British position and the West as a whole. Of course, both sides of the House have different versions of that misfortune. However, happily the people will be asked very soon to make their choice. I do not believe that they will find that choice too difficult. In the meantime, I have nothing but contempt for the partisan deviations from common sense in which the Opposition indulge in their contortions. That damages our security and does them no good.

The visit of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Moscow was of exceptional importance for two reasons. First, if I may put it this way, it was the laying of the foundation stone of the structure to create a broad dialogue with the Soviet Union. Such a dialogue has always been a prerequisite for reaching negotiated agreements. Of course, there are others such as adequate strengths, resolution and so forth. Whatever our differences, there must be some framework for a practical coexistence and that need has been given a fresh impetus by my right hon. Friend's visit. How that will develop remains to be seen, but at any rate it has provided a powerful boost.

The second reason for the importance of the visit is its bearing on the reforms now being undertaken in the Soviet Union—whatever they may turn out to be. The visit has dramatically demonstrated the enormous importance that we in the West attach to these reforms, and no one could have conveyed that message as well as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

My approach to the whole question of East-West relations starts from an assessment of the balance of strength. That balance is heavily in favour of the West in terms of human and physical resources, philosophy and ideals, technological skills and economic attainments. In only two areas has the Soviet Union an advantage. Its first advantage is in the military field, where it has superiority in conventional, chemical and nuclear capabilities. It is this superiority that is the reason for the Soviet Union's superpower status.

The Soviet Union's second advantage is its propaganda capability. I have never doubted that the people of the Soviet Union want peace just as much as we do, but there is no way of reaching them. They hear only what the Kremlin decides to tell them, except on this occasion when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was enabled to break through. The Soviet Union's total control of the media is in stark contrast to the position in the West, where at times there seems to be equal time for Soviet views as for our own.

The balance overall is strongly in our favour and that is one reason why the outlook from Moscow is so chilling. In that case, the best way to deal with the situation is, first, to ensure that our deterrent is at all times effective and in good shape. That is our shield which will deter attack and maintain peace. We must make whatever progress we can in negotiations and then get on with our business calmly and patiently while waiting for the inexorable movement of events and the rise of new generations in the Soviet Union which will cause changes in their system to occur.

I have always thought it a mistake to hurl abusive and futile rhetoric across the world. What had to be achieved was some co-existence with the Soviet Union, not accepting any of its ideals that are abhorrent to us but establishing a relationship which, in so far as it might have any effect in the Soviet Union, would encourage change. In essence, that was what the policy of containment was intended to achieve but it has had virtually no success so far. Now there are signs of change, but it is much too soon to assess them.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East talked about a historic turning point. That may or may not turn out to be the case. There is no change in the basic aims of the Soviet Union. It will not suddenly become a democracy or abandon its objectives. There is as yet no shred of evidence for that. It has released some detainees, but there is no suggestion from the Soviet Union that detention was wrong in the first place. The gap in defence capability continues to widen in favour of the Soviet Union, contrary to what many people wish to think. However, there is a change in style, which the Prime Minister's visit proved, and in due course that change can be judged.

Another change is also possible, and it is an improvement in the Soviet economy. Clearly, Mr. Gorbachev understands what has to be changed and is making a major effort to change it. There must still be some doubt about how successful he will be. He faces considerable internal opposition, and there is no change so far in the existing highly bureaucratic system, and no inducement for individual enterprise. Some commentators give him only a 50:50 chance. We shall see. If he could bring about a significant improvement in the economy he

[Mr. Francis Pym]

would achieve a notable change in the balance of strength between East and West. Perhaps it would not turn the tables, but nothing else would bring about so great a change in the Soviet Union.

I suspect that Mr. Gorbachev has another policy objective and it is to withdraw from Afghanistan. I think that has been confirmed by what my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said in his speech. That objective is not for ideological reasons but because Mr. Gorbachev is not winning the war. It was, of course, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan that turned world opinion so strongly against Russia. Whether there will be a withdrawal is an open question, but until there is a very large blot stains the Soviet record, as does the Berlin wall and many other things.

If the Soviet Union succeeds in sustaining openness, improving the economy and withdrawing from Afghanistan, there will be a big impact on the international scene and on people's attitude to the Soviet Union. In that event we would be entering a new phase in world affairs. That would be even more the case if the Soviet Union took a new and more relaxed attitude to eastern Europe. I have always believed that one of our major strategic objectives is to keep hope alive in the countries of eastern Europe, the hope that one day they will regain their right to decide their future for themselves. The division in Europe is a violence to our cultural and historical tradition which in the long run cannot endure. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on his attention to eastern Europe. I had planned to make those trips myself and I am delighted that he has taken such a great deal of trouble about it.

Already we are facing a time when the Soviet Union is projecting itself quite differently and is likely to be perceived quite differently. We must be prepared for that and understand the implications, because such a change has important policy implications and I should like to mention a few. The first of those, which I have already mentioned, is that until we see the actual strength and significance of the change we must remain hopeful but sceptical. Proof or lack of it will come soon enough and we must be realistic about it. Secondly, there must be consistency of policy throughout the West as a whole. That comes from a sustained purpose backed by the necessary means to carry it out. Of course, the Soviet Union can do this quite easily, because its purpose is pursued with the ruthlessness that is characteristic of its whole system. The West has an equally clear purpose.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The right hon. Gentleman says he wants to see actions. Is he thinking in terms of actions coming from only one side, or does he mean actions from, perhaps, the United States on, for instance, star wars?

Mr. Pym: I am speaking particularly about the changes that we see taking place in the Soviet Union. The West has an equally clear purpose. It is to prevent the spread of Communism and to convince the Third world of the superiority in every way of our system, the essence of which is the freedom of the individual. We must convince them that in our parliamentary democracies all views count. Of course, that makes it a more difficult system to manage, but it is a far stronger hand to play.

Consistency of policy requires better co-ordination of national views. That can be difficult when national interests conflict or when domestic political interests conflict with international needs. Of course the national interest is of paramount importance to every Government, but so is the international interest, which can sometimes become subsumed by domestic political pressure. A dangerous contemporary example that was mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is the threat of protectionism, which is a form of nationalism. The politics of protectionism may be understandable and its emotion is very human, but any lapse into the trap of protectionism can only lead to impoverishment and the undermining of security.

The world is interdependent, and internationalism must be nurtured in every democracy. The work done today by major international bodies such as GATT, the IMF, the European Community and many more is indispensable and has been made possible only by the confidence in international solutions that was shown after the war. Our task is to carry that forward and build on it.

The next aspect of policy with which I should like to deal is the allocation of resources. Every country is experiencing the enormous cost of defence, the Soviet Union no less than the rest of us. The total defence of the West could be bought at a lower cost if the political constraints against rationalisation and integration could be overcome. Even if they were, the allocation of resources would remain a key issue.

We need to reconsider whether collectively we commit enough resources to preventive action to reduce the risks of subversions and regional conflict. The Soviet Union continues to pursue its nefarious aims around the world with considerable skill. The question arises as to what extent countries such as Nicaragua and Cuba are tools of the Soviet Union or to what extent they are free agents. They are not free, in the sense that they need a great deal of aid, which can only come from Communist sources. The revolutionary zeal that they exhibit cannot be manufactured by Moscow; there is an indigenous element. The idea that all subversion is being done by surrogates is misleading because it obscures the fact that a movement for revolution must already exist in such countries. It would be more realistic to say that such conflicts are not only aspects of East-West competition, but that they also have indigenous causes and consequences.

The policy objective, therefore, is to deny the Soviet Union the opportunity to make such trouble, which is, to say the least, a formidable task and one that encompasses all aspects of international relations.

I shall take one example, which was mentioned by my right hon and learned Friend—the debt crisis. To leave that unresolved is sure to lead to disruption of some kind. It is contrary to the policy objective. We know that efforts are being made at the moment by the Group of Five to solve this problem, but it is nowhere near to solving it yet. Finance and loans have been provided on a massive scale without foreseeing the consequences, such as that most of those countries have little or, in some cases, virtually no means of repayment, and also the unforeseen consequence of the rise in population. Mexico, Kenya and many other countries are such examples.

What has been our response? It has been an insistence on sterner economic discipline. That is fine as far as it goes, but there are obvious political limits to this, which have already been reached in some countries. The only way to

obtain more economic discipline is to accompany it with more help. I am glad that the Government are now providing that help, but few others are. I do not see how else the West can create an environment which reduces the opportunities for subversion. I should like to see the annual summit of the seven industrialised nations address this question far more directly and comprehensively than it has thus far because it has a profound bearing on the security of the West.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the all-party committee on overseas development is issuing a pamphlet on the subject of debt, which is to be published on 5 May, and which puts forward some serious suggestions from which the British Government can take initiatives to try to produce a solution to the indebtedness of the poorest and Latin American countries?

Mr. Pym: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. The Foreign Secretary is doing all that he can. However, it is a major international question. What concerned me for a long time, including when I was Foreign Secretary, was that the issue did not receive the degree of attention that it required.

My final point concerns the supreme importance of keeping our electorate fully informed on East-West relations and of maintaining its expectations at whatever level the circumstances justify. Public opinion is of crucial importance. It is the bottom line of our defence, which is why the lack of all-party agreement on this matter is so dangerous.

If the Sovet Union is beginning to appreciate the deep significance of public opinion, that is a huge advance. Even if it is, the process will take decades to develop. The changes that we are beginning to see must not be exaggerated; they must be encouraged and we must be patient and see how they develop.

The sheer complexity of arms control negotiations must constantly be brought home to people, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have done, otherwise too much will be expected too soon, which will lead to disappointment and frustration. That must be avoided at all costs.

What is required is the utmost dedication to the negotiations in Geneva, Vienna and every other forum until agreements which are acceptable and verifiable to both sides are achieved, however long or short a time that takes.

In the meantime, we must maintain our deterrent in full working order at all times and at whatever level the circumstances of the time require. We must build with enthusiasm and imagination the best working relationship that we can with the Soviet Union and hope that it will be reciprocated.

These are just some of the main considerations for the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister to keep in mind in the immediate future. There is no doubt in my mind that the world is entering a phase when the challenges and opportunities are enormous. It is a huge test of statesmanship to ensure that those challenges are met and that those opportunities are taken.

5.45 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): During the exchanges which took place last Thursday after the Prime Minister had reported on her visit to Russia I observed that a radical transformation in the defence and foreign policies of this country was in progress. I had the impression, after I had said that, that a number of hon. Members were puzzled as to what I was referring to, but that the Prime Minister was not one of those who were in any difficulty. In the recent past, I will not say that she helped to bring about that transformation, but her actions and words have illustrated and strikingly underlined it.

For the past 30 years the defence and therefore the foreign policy of this country have been based on the nuclear hypothesis, which is otherwise known as the concept of the nuclear deterrent. It asserts that the superiority in conventional armaments of Russia and her allies over ourselves and our allies is so great that the Soviet Union is now and has been during the last generation prevented from engulfing western Europe in war only by the certainty that the United States, in such an event, would resort to the use of its nuclear arsenal.

The nuclear hypothesis has gone though a number of phases, in each of which it has endeavoured to cope with its main difficulty, which is that of its sheer incredibility. Its earliest phase was that of the tripwire, which was the simplest form of the nuclear hypothesis—the first toecap of a Russian soldier which crosses the line dividing Europe will be the signal for the nuclear holocaust to be unchained by the United States. That was incredible in itself because of the lack of balance between the nature of a perceived event and the response to it, as well as the difficulty of assuming that the United States would so closely identify itself with a certain state of affairs in western Europe as to be prepared, and at all stages visibly ready, to take that step for the sake of it.

Progressively the tripwire had to be modified. The two days' interval was lengthened to five days. Then, it was thought to be quite a good idea for us to have a battle or two and see how we would get on following a Russian invasion. An American SACEUR even had the thought that it would be a good plan, in the throes of a Russian invasion, to counter-attack the country from which that invasion had been launched.

But the biggest development which took place in the theory of the nuclear deterrent, however it originally came about, was the introduction of the intermediate range ballistic missile.

The beauty of the intermediate range ballistic missile was that whereas previously the Soviet Union and the United States, facing one another across the infernal chessboard, had been equally at risk by any move which they made upon it. By means of the intermediate range ballistic missile it was possible to suppose that they could make at any rate gambits in the deadly game without involving their own existence and safety or the survival of the populations which they represented. So, thanks not least to the intermediate range ballistic missile, we lived, until recently, with reasonable contentment under the umbrella, not of the nuclear deterrent, but of the nuclear hypothesis. It is, incidentally, a hypothesis of extreme convenience and, for Treasury Ministers, of extreme advantage, in that if one can believe that one's enemy is kept at bay by the threat of someone else using nuclear armaments that is about the cheapest defence policy available.

This delightful state of affairs has in recent years been disturbed by two events. The first is star wars. Star wars raised the terrible prospect that there might be an effective

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

means of neutralising the inter-continental ballistic missile, whereby the two great giants who held what had become to be seen as the balance of terror would contract out of the game altogether: the deterrent would be switched off by the invulnerability of the two providers of the mutual terror.

Thus, it was with great difficulty and not without the inducement of a number of valuable research and development contracts that the United States European allies were brought along to acquiesce in the United States engaging in the rational activity of discovering whether there was after all some defence against nuclear attack. Even so, they were only quieted by the apparent assurance obtained from the United States that it was only engaged in experiment and research, and that, if there were any danger of effective protection being devised, of course the United States would not avail itself of that protection without the agreement of its European allies. That was the first recent event which shook to its foundations the nuclear deterrent with which we had lived these last 30 years.

The second and more recent event was the threat to the intermediate ballistic missile itself. This was sprung upon us by our old friend Gorbachev with his suggestion to the United States, "Let's both scrap them, old boy; let's have the zero option"—I do not know why it is called the zero option but it is fashionable to call it that. "Let's get rid of the intermediate range ballistic missile altogether." Terror then spread through the ranks of the European end of the NATO Alliance. What were they to do with their nuclear deterrent because they would lose the possibility of a credible nuclear gambit sufficient to provide for their defence and would be back again staring in the face the basic inconceivability of United States suicide as the response to Russian aggression.

The negotiations and observations of the Prime Minister on that subject in the last few weeks, and particularly during and subsequent to her visit to Russia, have been particularly revealing. The Prime Minister was reluctant to see what was called the zero option. Logically — given her assumptions — she wanted something considerably less far-reaching. She therefore said, "If we are to lose the intermediate range ballistic missile, we cannot stop there; as soon as possible, and preferably within any such negotiation, we must do something about short range ballistic missiles." But the most significant point was when she went on to say that we must aim at a conventional forces balance. So, after all our journeys of the last 30 or 40 years, the disappearance of the intermediate range ballistic missile revived the old question of the supposed conventional imbalance between the Russian alliance and the North Atlantic Alliance. The rabbit had gone back down the hole from which it originally emerged.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): The right hon. Gentleman's premises are interesting, but they are not quite up to date. The spectrum of deterrence will not be dramatically altered by the zero option if we take into account that submarine-launched ballistic missiles and air-launched missile systems will remain. The right hon. Gentleman says that if intermediate range ballistic missiles go we shall not be able to inflict massive destruction on centres of population in the Soviet Union. That is not so, since strategic deterrents will remain and many medium-range systems of other types will remain.

Mr. Powell: I was obviously not clear. My point was that with the disappearance of the intermediate range ballistic missiles from the picture we should be back again with the strategic exchange—that very exchange between the heartlands of the two nuclear giants which underlay the inherent incredibility of the whole nuclear hypothesis.

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), however, is in line with the Prime Minister — I make no complaint about that — for the Prime Minister arrived at a remarkable conclusion. She said:

"we simply will not stand for the denuclearisation of Europe."
—[*Official Report*, 2 April 1987; Vol. 113, c. 1229.]

What a remarkable conclusion. After all these endeavours at disarmament as a detente, the Prime Minister is forced by the inherent implications of British defence policy into a declared assertion that she

"will not stand for the denuclearisation of Europe".

The reason is obvious. It is because she is confronting the collapse, or evaporation into the upper air, of the nuclear hypothesis itself. That hypothesis never had a realistic basis. It never was a rational assumption. It is not entirely accidental that closer contact between this country and the Soviet Union has helped to mature that perception.

The Prime Minister constantly asserts that the nuclear weapon has kept the peace in Europe for the last 40 years. It is an article of faith repeated by her in a manner that shows how conscious she is of the weakening foundations upon which it now rests, not only in people's minds generally, but in her own perception. After all, she has, for the first time, formed some conception of the nature of that extraordinary people, the Russian nation, whom our difficulty in understanding is exceeded only by their difficulty in understanding us.

Let us make a test. Let us go back to the middle 1950s or to the end of the 1940s, and let us suppose that nuclear power had never been invented, that no such advance had taken place in science or technology, but that everything else was the same. I assert that in those circumstances there would still not have been a Russian invasion of western Europe. What has prevented that from happening was not the nuclear hypothesis, not the incredible threat of an incredible act—I use words already used this afternoon by the Opposition spokesman — but the fact that the Soviet Union knew the consequences of such a move, consequences which would have followed whether or not there were 300,000 American troops stationed in Europe.

The Soviet Union knew that such an action on its part would have led to a third world war — a long war, bitterly fought, a war which in the end the Soviet Union would have been likely to lose on the same basis and in the same way as the corresponding war was lost by Napoleon, by the Emperor Wilhelm and by Adolf Hitler.

It was that fear, that caution, that understanding, that perception on the part of Russia and its leaders that was the real deterrent against Russia committing the utterly irrational and suicidal act of plunging into a third world war in which the Soviet Union would be likely to find itself confronting a combination of the greatest industrial and economic powers in the world.

There is no particular mystery about the fact that peace has existed in Europe over the past 40 years. It is due to the fact that the Soviet Union, and indeed the Soviet Union's enemies, have not intended to face the

consequences of a third world war waged between the major powers on earth. In the minds of the Russians the inevitable commitment of the United States in such a war would have come not directly or necessarily from the stationing of American marines in Germany, but, as it came in the previous two struggles, from the ultimate involvement of the United States in any war determining the future of Europe.

There never has been a rational basis for that upon which we have founded the defence policy of this country for the past 35 years, and the defence policy of this country is necessarily linked ultimately to its foreign policy. For of course a logically irresistible conclusion followed from the creed that our safety depended upon the nuclear capability of the United States and its willingness to commit that capability in certain events. If that was so—and we assured ourselves for 40 years that it was—the guiding principle of the foreign policy of the United Kingdom had to be that, in no circumstances, must it depart from the basic insights of the United States and that any demand placed in the name of defence upon the United Kingdom by the United States was a demand that could not be resisted. Such was the rigorous logic of the nuclear deterrent, a logic under which not merely the defence, but the foreign policy of this country has lived for more than a generation.

It was in obedience to it—we are indebted again to the Prime Minister for her candour; sometimes it is the candour of the Prime Minister which is most revealing as well as her choice of words—that the Prime Minister said, in the context of the use of American bases in Britain to launch an aggressive attack on Libya, that it was "inconceivable" that we could have refused a demand placed upon this country by the United States. The Prime Minister supplied the reason why: she said it was because we depend for our liberty and freedom upon the United States. Once let the nuclear hypothesis be questioned or destroyed, once allow it to break down, and from that moment the American imperative in this country's policies disappears with it.

A few days ago I was reminded, when reading a new biography of Richard Cobden, that he once addressed a terrible sentence of four words to this House of Commons. He said to hon. Members: "You have been Englishmen." The strength of those words lies in the perfect tense, with the implication that they were so no longer but had within themselves the power to be so again.

I believe that we now have the opportunity, with the dissolution of the nightmare of the nuclear theory, for this country once again to have a defence policy that accords with the needs of this country as an island nation, and to have a foreign policy which rests upon a true, undistorted view of the outside world. Above all, we have the opportunity to have a foreign policy that is not dictated from outside to this country, but willed by its people. That day is coming. It may be delayed, but it will come.

6.4 pm

Sir Carol Mather (Esher): I hope that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) will forgive me if I do not follow his line of argument, because I am on a slightly different tack. I think that this afternoon is an opportunity to try to look at some of the origins of the problems that we face today in foreign affairs. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said that, in common with the Russians, we should think long, and I believe that we should think longer than we usually do. Therefore, I make no apology for going back in time to consider some of the problems.

First, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on their extremely successful visit to Moscow. There has been a great change of atmosphere between ourselves and the Soviet Union, indeed between the West and the Soviet Union, and that change has been greatly enhanced by this recent visit. I believe that we are witnessing the biggest change in atmosphere in the postwar period. I can think of no other period when we were involved in such dialogue with Russia other than the year of 1944 when we were allies with the Soviet Union, and the Germans and their collaborators were our enemies.

Of course, things changed in 1945 when we began to see the true nature of the Russian bear. We learnt this at the Yalta conference when we were trying to deal with the intractable problems of the reoccupation of Germany by the allied powers, free elections in Poland and the repatriation of our prisoners, both Russian and British. I wish to dwell on the problem of repatriation for a few moments because that problem has not gone away.

The reasons why it was so important for us to come to an agreement at Yalta were, above all, that we had 50,000 allied prisoners in Russian hands. We also had a continuing war with Japan, which looked likely to continue for another two years—it was important to have the Russians on our side—and there were vast problems in Germany and the occupied territories. There were millions of emaciated people in Germany and Austria whom we were trying to feed as well as vast numbers of refugees and large numbers of displaced persons—Poles, Hungarians and so on.

Then, the urgent problem was to repatriate the people back to their homelands while we had enough food for them. I had experience of this because I was with the northern armies and was liaison officer to Montgomery. I was working on those problems, visiting the camps and trying to report on how we would repatriate all the people. It was an immense problem.

In the north there were 20 million Germans and displaced people to look after and to feed. Housing had been destroyed and the standard of health was low. There were 2·5 million German prisoners of war and 1 million displaced persons—Russians, Poles, Hungarians and so on. In West Berlin alone there were 3 million people whom we had to feed, not from the hinterland, but from the western zone of Germany. There was one policy alone—everyone must go home. It was the same in Austria.

In addition to such problems, we were faced by the frightening attitude adopted by the Soviet Union under the leadership of Stalin. At that time our future was indeed precarious. In the biography of Eden written by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) Churchill is reported as saying that the situation was more dangerous in 1945 than it was in 1939.

By far the most important factor in our discussions was, of course, the prisoners—the return of our prisoners to us and vice versa in the case of the Russians. My noble Friend Lord Barber wrote an interesting letter. He was a prisoner of war in Russian hands in East Germany, overrun by the Russians. He made an important point which was reported in a debate in the House of Lords in 1976. He was a member of an air crew which had been captured. His letter said:

[Sir Carol Mather]

"We realised at the time that we were being kept as hostages until the return of the Russians, who had been liberated by the British. If the Government had refused to return the Russians, I do not doubt that most of us would have accepted our unhappy lot as being a necessary consequence of the aftermath of war!"

That was a noble sentiment, but it did not wash at home. It would not have been in accordance with British public opinion at the time when the main desire was to get everyone back home. That is the background to events in Austria in 1945.

My first contact in Normandy after we landed on D plus one was, strangely enough, with a Cossack unit. They were among the first German troops that I met. I was having my breakfast. They were more surprised at seeing me than I was at seeing them. Those were the people with whom we were faced in many of the German units.

Under the Yalta agreement we repatriated about 45,000 Wehrmacht Cossacks to the Soviet Union. Inevitably, White Russians were included in those numbers. If we had not maintained the Yalta agreement we would have been in dire trouble. At the same time, major units of Russians and Ukranians were spirited away — the Ukranian division of some 10,000 men and the White Russians Schutz Corps of some 4,500 men.

That has been the subject of two books by Mr. Nicholas Tolstoi which contain some pathetic stories. But untold so far have been the successful efforts by anonymous pimpernels to thwart the Soviet intentions and free those people to the West. I have no personal axe to grind in this, but I should like to see historical justice done. Tolstoi, in his book, "Minister and the Massacres", accuses the then Minister resident in those parts, Harold Macmillan, of conspiring to send those people to their deaths. That is the clear implication of what he said.

There is plenty of opinion by the author in that book, but very little hard fact. It casts a slur on the War Cabinet of those days and on the commanders and staff in the field as well as on our allies who were in full agreement with the policy. I utterly reject the theory that the late Lord Stockton was involved in a devious plot.

What was the outcome? Stalin insisted upon his pound of flesh and we had to send the Soviet citizens back. Many of them were shot or perished in the gulags. There were no free elections in Poland, as we had agreed, and many of the smaller old European countries were swallowed up by Stalin.

But this last outcome, in particular, could have been avoided. Unfortunately, there was a dispute between the British and the Americans about our policy in the final stages of advance. The Americans favoured a broad front advance and we favoured a narrow one, as advocated by Montgomery. I am convinced that we could have been in Berlin by Christmas 1944 if we had adhered to the narrow front strategy. As it was, we halted and waited for the Russians to move up. We could also have occupied Czechoslovakia. I remember being sent to Czechoslovakia in 1946 by Montgomery to see the commander there. I talked to the people and I remember how fearful they were of being swallowed up by the Russians, as, indeed, they were. If we had continued with our advance, Europe would have been a different place today.

There are two more cautionary tales that I would like to tell and they concern the middle east. The Attlee Government ordered the evacuation of Palestine in October 1947. It was to be evacuated by May the following year. I and my chums who were there were told to pack up and go home. We had been keeping the peace there and we were astounded by that drastic and ill-considered decision.

As it turned out, the Arabs did not see off the Jews. The Jews were trained for war because they had been fighting us, and the Arabs, unfortunately, were seen off and lost their lands. That has set off a kind of political Chernobyl, whose noxious fumes are still poisoning the world today. We have only to look at worldwide terrorism, events in the Lebanon and the rising of the Arab Jihad to see what a pot we stirred up in those days.

My final tale concerns the events in the Persian gulf a few years ago. When the Conservative Government came to power in 1970 it was virtually a fait accompli that we had to leave the Persian gulf. That had been decided by the previous Labour Government. I want to ask some rhetorical questions to which there are no answers, but they should still be considered.

If we had retained our presence in the Persian gulf and had been in communion with the Arab rulers who were friendly towards us, would the oil crisis have taken quite the same form that it took? Would OPEC have arisen in the form that it did? Would the Shah have fallen if we had been there to hold his hand? Would the American hostages have been taken by the following Government? Would, indeed, the Iran-Iraq war have taken place?

I hope that recounting those experiences gives some clues to the problems that we are facing today. This is, in a way, my maiden speech, but, in case it is also my valedictory one, I wanted to put that on the record.

6.17 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): It will be a pity if the hon. Member for Esher (Sir C. Mather) has, indeed, just made his valedictory speech because he spoke from personal experience on matters which I hope the House will some day debate at greater length. This is not the opportunity to go into them, but it would be instructive if the House were to debate that period and some of the things that happened.

That period teaches us something about what can go wrong in Government in such circumstances. It cannot have been right that the Government's policies should have been so distorted in the event that people, many of whom were not even citizens of the Soviet Union, were sent back there to certain death or to long periods of imprisonment in camps in which they eventually died. It is also instructive because it tells us something about what the Soviet system is like when used in the malevolent way in which Stalin used it. It tells us a great deal about the evils of that system, but that is a matter for another occasion.

I said last week that there would be a general and genuine welcome for the outcome of the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow, and that has proved to be the case. I do not believe, as she said, that the world is significantly safer as a result of the visit, although it could become so if the right steps now follow from it. It certainly changed the Prime Minister's perception of the Soviet Union. It was remarkable to hear some of the things that she said when she returned.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was obviously struck by that and made much of it, although, having made his speech, he fled instantly from

the scene to visit the far east. When he made so much of the Prime Minister's conversion, I had some sympathy with what he was saying, but he did nothing to indicate whether some similar process or a different process explained his conversion from the belief that a nuclear deterrent had to be stationed on British soil to the view that there should be no such thing and that all nuclear weapons should be removed from Britain. At some point he may explain how that came about. Perhaps it will lead us to be more sympathetic to the view advanced by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). The right hon. Member for Leeds, East owes it to us to explain how that conversion took place — whether it was through talking to a foreign leader, or at a Labour party back room discussion, I do not know.

The Prime Minister said that we should support Mr. Gorbachev in his great endeavour. That was a remarkable phrase for her to use after the years of megaphone diplomacy. She also said that if he gave her his word she would trust him. I think that that was a rather naive phrase. It is an understandable reaction to Mr. Gorbachev, whom I met, in company with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East and Lord Whitelaw, a year ago, in what turned out to be a dress rehearsal for Mrs. Thatcher's visit. We were taken round the same places on the standard tour. It is a naive remark because it underestimates the extent to which Mr. Gorbachev is part of a system. He is attempting in certain ways to change that system, but we do not know how far he is able or willing to change it. Most of us admire what he is trying to do and what he has achieved so far, but we must be a little cautious about the type of deals that we do with him; the best basis on which to form agreements is one on which there is realism on both sides. Both sides must accept that an agreement that has been reached safeguards their interests, and that sacrifices must be made by both sides. It is on that basis, and not on the trust of words alone, that matters must proceed.

So far as I can glean from what the Prime Minister said, and from her reported remarks, I believe that she got it about right on some of the major issues, including that of intermediate nuclear forces. I was genuinely worried about what she said before she went to Moscow, when she seemed to be ruling out an intermediate nuclear forces deal that was not directly linked with short-range missiles or human rights issues.

I am glad that the Prime Minister raised human rights issues in Moscow — the position of Jews wanting to emigrate, the position of Christians, and issues of general political rights. By raising those issues, the Prime Minister did us a service.

It was also sensible for her to raise our concerns about short-range missiles. However, to link either of those issues with the achievement of an agreement on intermediate nuclear forces would be to condemn the deal. There is no way in which progress on them could objectively be ascertained. One cannot ascertain objectively whether sufficient progress on human rights has been made to allow a deal on intermediate nuclear forces. The linkage is not even a logical one. Still less was it any part of the West's original insistence on the zero-zero option. The Prime Minister's remarks about verification, about follow-on talks on short-range missiles and about allowing the West to match—if it wanted to—the East's numbers were all within the terms of reference of the Soviet leadership's acceptance of the zero-zero option. It is, by the way, curious at this stage to raise the idea of the West matching the short-range missiles, when we have not attempted to do that in all the years during which we have not been prevented from doing so. So that is a false hare to raise now.

I hope and pray that we shall obtain a deal on intermediate nuclear forces that will help to make the world a safer place. However, I do not agree with all that the Prime Minister said in Moscow. Naturally, we profoundly disagree with her line on star wars — as would Dr. Andrei Sakharov. If that was one of the subjects that she discussed with him, she will have found him a critic of it. It is helpful that the Soviet Union has set aside for a moment its preoccupation with the star wars issue in order to make progress in other areas, but it remains a matter of real concern that the British Government should fuel President Reagan's commitment to the project, which is the subject of so many doubts and criticisms inside the United States.

What a contrast there was between the two visits that were made, respectively, by the leader of the Labour party and the Prime Minister. The right hon. Gentleman's visit was doomed to failure from the start — by its very nature, it could not succeed. It involved trying to persuade the United States that NATO can continue without its bases in the United Kingdom. For the Prime Minister's visit to fail, however, would have been both difficult and foolish. However, she took her opportunity well, and succeeded.

The two leaders are alike in one respect: they are both, in one sense at least, unilateralists. The one believes that Britain can achieve general disarmament by acting alone: the other believes that British nuclear weapons should for ever be excluded, even from multilateral negotiations. The Labour party believes that we can act as if we had neither allies nor enemies, and abandon every category of nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom without first having negotiated to make the world safer. The Prime Minister said that she could not conceive of a position in which British or European nuclear weapons would be negotiated away, even if the superpowers negotiated away all their nuclear weapons. Both Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev have explicitly stated that that is their aim.

The Prime Minister told the leader of the Labour party that one could not build one's defence policies on dreams, and most of us would agree with that. The leader of the Labour party was wrong, not in having dreams, but in building his defence policy on the assumption that they had already been realised. To have no dreams, vision or ambitions, as the Prime Minister's remark suggested, is to throw away any prospect of achieving great things—"where there is no vision, the people perish". Without dreams there would have been no desegregation in the United States, no United Nations, and no abolition of slavery. All those were achieved because of vision and ambition. The mistake is to assume that one has achieved one's dream before one has done so. Of course, we should have a vision of a world without nuclear weapons. It should drive us on the step-by-step route to negotiated disarmament.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs mentioned the issue of Afghanistan, which has also, doubtless, been the subject of discussion between the Government and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. I and other hon. Members also had discussions on the issue with him during his visit. There is a sense of optimism abroad.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

From Pakistan there are suggestions of a real prospect of movement. From Moscow, one senses that Mr. Gorbachev is serious about getting out of Afghanistan. He suggested as much to us last summer. I believe that to be true for the reasons that the Foreign Secretary advanced. The whole exercise has been a disaster for the Soviet Union from every point of view. It has cost it a great many lives and a great deal of repute in parts of the world in which it hoped to win friends.

The Soviet Union has not yet found terms that it considers would be acceptable for leaving Afghanistan. The attempt to move to a position in which the people of Afghanistan can have a say in their own future and the vast numbers of refugees in Pakistan can return to their country should be a major objective of all the nations that are involved. I hope that the British Government are doing what they can in that direction.

Central America is another area of conflict that we must examine. The American-supported Contra attacks on Nicaragua continue, and unrest persists in a number of neighbouring countries. It is time the Government clarified their position. They have frequently said that their policy is to seek a peaceful solution. As a logical consequence of that, they must be opposed to the arming of groups that are seeking to overthrow the Government of Nicaragua. Why cannot the Government state that? Is it because of their inability to give candid advice to the President of the United States, while so many of his own countrymen are doing precisely that—including most of Congress? The Government should change their stance on the issue.

It is important to argue for human rights in Nicaragua and in many other countries. It is impossible, however, to justify the Contra attacks on the ground that Nicaragua has a distinctively bad record on human rights, as compared with other countries in south and central America. There is no reason why the Government should not argue for more human rights there, but they cannot defend such attacks on that basis.

In the context of human rights, I hope that the Government will examine the proposals that have been put forward by the representatives of three Nicaraguan Opposition parties who are in the United Kingdom now. Senor Godoy of the Independent Liberal party and representatives of other parties have made proposals for an internal political settlement that would make a major difference in Nicaragua and in the attitude to Nicaragua of neighbouring countries. It has common features with the Arias plan, and I hope that the British Government will consider that seriously. There will be hon. Members from all parties in Managua to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Union congress and I have no doubt that the arguments to which I have referred will continue then.

Another major area of conflict that concerns us all is the middle east. The Foreign Secretary said a little about the prospects for a middle east peace conference, which were somewhat advanced by the discussions of the Council of Ministers. Perhaps the Minister of State will say more about that when he replies. I hope that he will tell us what is envisaged and the sort of time scale that will apply. It would be foolish to get down to discussing in this debate the formulae for the representation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and the Foreign Secretary was rightly cautious about that. It is clear, however, that the voice of the people of Palestine must be heard at the conference, and the PLO has an honoured record of representing that voice over a long period.

We are dealing with a rapidly changing situation. Who would have imagined a time when Israel could be so relaxed about Syria moving into Beirut? Who would have imagined the main opponent of the PLO would not be Israel but an Arab grouping of fanatical ruthlessness? It is a fanatical and ruthless grouping which claims to be pursuing the same cause as the unfortunate Palestinians who are trapped in camps, and it has subjected them to the most awful privations in the process. It is not Israel that has done that.

It is perhaps surprising that after the arguments that we had about Syria last year we can welcome at least some moves on its part. This prompts the question whether Syria will come in from the cold and what steps we shall take to encourage that to happen. I argued strongly over a considerable period that Britain should end its diplomatic relations with Syria in the light of evidence of Syria sponsoring terrorist activity in Britain, but some of those who were involved in that activity are no longer in positions of power in Syria, and Syria is beginning to show signs of a different approach. When I questioned the Prime Minister on these matters, she seemed appalled by the suggestion that we might in future try to restore good relations with Syria. We must recognise that it is an important player on the middle east scene and exercises a great deal of power. We shall have to consider seriously what Syria's role will be.

In a general foreign affairs debate we must make some reference to South Africa, where elections among the white electorate alone are shortly to take place. There is surely a need for a clearer signal than has yet been given by the British Government and other European Governments, and I believe that it can be given only by applying sanctions against South Africa.

We are engaged in a series of measures against South Africa but it is not polite to call them sanctions. A much clearer signal needs to be given to the white electorate that Britain cannot be described, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East described the present Government, as the last friend of the apartheid regime. I do not believe that to be the intentional position of the British Government, but I think that they should take clearer measures to ensure that it is not. The situation in some of the neighbouring countries should be exciting the Foreign Secretary's concern as well, not least Angola and Mozambique.

The Philippines, although not the scene of international conflict, are nevertheless an area of real concern. Everyone in the West was relieved to see a transfer of power to a Government with democratic objectives and high ideals for the people of that country, who suffered so much from a corrupt regime. There is a legitimate European interest in the Philippines that is reflected in major aid projects. There are a number of causes for anxiety, and one of them has been expressed by those who are working in the area of development who say that European aid is not taking sufficient account of the non-governmental voluntary organisations and their expertise in the country. If that is the position, I hope that it can be corrected. I hope also that the British Government will make it clear that they are prepared to play their part in relieving the Philippine Government's serious debt problem. There are various

devices and methods that can be used. It is part of the wider international problem and we have a part to play in resolving it.

There are many other subjects that I should like to raise in this general foreign affairs debate. Unfortunately, I cannot do so because many other right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in it. If the world is to be made a safer place, painstaking work will have to be done at many levels. Apart from bilateral discussions, work will have to be done in the United Nations, including in its peacekeeping role, in the Commonwealth, in the Community and in the international financial community. Britain's interests are in a fairer world, and only a fairer world will be a safer world.

6.36 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), the shadow Foreign Secretary, saw fit to criticise the leaders of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties for not being present for this debate. I think that he was right to do so. It is unfortunate that they are not present in this increasingly county-council like Chamber in which foreign affairs are not often discussed. I noticed that the right hon. Gentleman did not have the courtesy to listen to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), who was called to speak immediately after the right hon. Member for Leeds, East had resumed his seat.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): May I repeat what my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said? He explained that he would have liked to stay but that he had arranged earlier to go to Japan and that he had to leave. If the debate had started earlier, my right hon. Friend would have been here. His departure from the Chamber was meant as no discourtesy to the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), a former Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Amery: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that correction. I should have liked the right hon. Gentleman to be present to hear a shameful admission that I am about to make. Not long ago some of us went over to the north of France to celebrate the landings there. A distinguished Minister of a foreign country approached me with his wife and said to her, "I want to introduce you to Mr. Denis Healey." I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman or the ambassador in Washington should be more worried. Personally, I take it on the jaw.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, I think rightly, that her visit might be a turning point in East-West relations. I think that it has underlined three things. The Soviets have reached a point at which they must put first priority on restructuring their system, which has failed to deliver the goods. Whether austerity in the supply of vodka and other goods will do the trick, I cannot tell. That is a matter for them. I think that they will succeed only if they can get the central European economy, the German economy, to work for them.

It was made clear during the visit of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that the Soviets attach great importance to arms control. That is not from any dislike of weapons but because it has become clear, especially since the American commitment to the strategic defence initiative, that there is no way in which they can compete with the United States in an arms race and a technological race.

Finally, it has become clear that Mr. Brezhnev's conquests of Angola, Mozambique and finally Afghanistan have failed in the sense that they have been unable in nearly 10 years to consolidate the ground that they took.

We may be on the edge of something similar to the time in the 1920s when Stalin gave up the idea of international revolution and decided to build "Socialism in one country." That did not do the Russian people much good, but it relieved the pressure on the West. Against this background, I think that the phrase "the turning point" may be right.

The opening gambit of the new era of dialogue is the zero-zero option. My impression from talks in Washington are that America would like to see this go ahead. It was their idea originally and the President would like to have an arms agreement if he can get it.

From a European point of view, there is not much in it for us. The arms burden will not be relieved to any extent. It is true that the SS20s will be withdrawn. But even if the agreement is followed by an agreement on shorter range weapons, the fact remains—and I felt that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) had not taken this fully into account—that the intercontinental missiles of the Soviet Union can perfectly well be trained on European targets without involving the United States.

That brings us back to the situation about which Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was concerned when he asked for the Pershing and cruise missiles to be sent. He said then that if one eliminates the American ability to retaliate from Europe, one will magnify European concern that the Americans might not respond to a Soviet attack on Europe whether nuclear or conventional. And this would give momentum to what has always been an underlying Soviet strategy of decoupling western Europe at best and Germany at least from the United States.

It is possible that we are now facing a new situation of which we should take account. Let us put ourselves in the shoes of a patriotic German. There would be two options open to him. One is to back away from NATO, not too quickly but gently, and let German finance and industry through joint ventures and so on embark on a policy of helping to restructure eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He would seek as his aim the reunion of the two Germanies. That would be a respectable aim and in itself —taking the example of Finland where a Conservative Government is about to take office — need not necessarily imply a change in the German constitution.

The alternative would be for West Germany to seek to have its own nuclear weapons. I have friends in Germany in quite high places who would take that view and would argue that 40 years after the war when Germany is making the greatest contributions to the defence of the West in conventional terms—the terms on which the Leader of the Opposition is so keen—it is ridiculous to deny it weapons that another half a dozen countries have already. That is not an immediate issue but it will develop in time.

In putting back to us—it was our proposal originally —the zero-zero option Mr. Gorbachev is reopening the German question and with it the whole question of the peace treaty that has never been concluded. He is opening a Pandora's box. I am not sure what will come out of the box, but the implications for Europe are serious.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a third option for a patriotic responsible German might be to enhance Franco-German strategic and military co-operation and to ensure that the French force de frappe was more readily available to provide a nuclear response to any Warsaw pact aggression against the Federal Republic? Are not the exercises due to take place in the autumn and the fact that the Force d'Action Rapide is available to deploy in the Federal Republic signals that that option is being explored seriously within the Federal Republic as well as in Paris?

Mr. Amery: My hon. Friend is on to the crucial point. We have to ask ourselves how far the Germans would accept a French or Anglo-French nuclear cover.

There are two lessons we have to draw, not immediately but we must think about it, from the reopening of the German question which the zero-zero option implies. The first is that we and the French must strengthen our own nuclear power along with the French as much as possible and if there is no superpower agreement on short range nuclear weapons we must go ahead and make our own. That is a difficult problem, and we do not yet know the answer to it.

Here I want to say a word to the empty alliance Benches. It is all very well for the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and the leader of the Liberal party to say that they want a minimum deterrent. They said that they did not think that Trident was necessary because it was too powerful. That is a sort of strategic inverted snobbery. If one is going to think in terms of decoupling Germany, let alone western Europe, from the United States surely one wants the best weapon one can get. One will not get anything cheaper than Trident, so one might as well go for the best.

Mr. Beith: If the right hon. Gentleman is thinking of decoupling, how is it effective decoupling to have a system which is wholly dependent on the continued support of the United States for its supply?

Mr. Amery: It is conceivable that in the process of decoupling the United States would go on supplying us with Trident, just as it is conceivable — the hon. Gentleman should not forget this—that it would supply the Germans with nuclear weapons under their own control as the price for letting its troops go. I hope that we are moving gradually into a rather different era.

The other implication we must consider—here I meet the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) — is that we must strengthen the Western European Union and make it into an effective defence organisation and ensure that Germany plays a more important role in it. I see no conflict between NATO and the WEU. It so happens that I wrote the memorandum that persuaded Sir Anthony Eden to accept WEU. In it I said that NATO is a box to keep the Russians out of Europe and that we need to have a box to keep the Germans in Europe. That is really the effective programme. I put it crudely, but these things had better be said crudely if they are to be followed.

The Soviet Union is clearly keen on arms control and that provides an opportunity that we should press to resolve the regional problems that separate us. The arms race, which had come to a halt in what one might call the Nixon-Brezhnev period, started up again with the Soviet invasion through surrogates in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia, the takeover of Aden, increasing influence in Vietnam and finally the invasion of Afghanistan.

In none of those places has the Soviet Union succeeded in consolidating Communist rule. The Soviets can supply arms, and they do, but they cannot supply development aid. Mozambique has become a caricature from that point of view. It is nominally a Marxist-Socialist country, but it is helped, as far as I can make out, by South Africa, Britain and the United States and help is going, in some cases, to both sides in their civil war.

To abandon any of those countries, particularly Afghanistan, involves a denial of the Brezhnev doctrine that one can never let down a Socialist state. However, some interesting exercises in semantics are going on. Dr. Kissinger claims that he was told at a seminar in Moscow the other day that Afghanistan is not really a Communist country or even really Socialist. Therefore, perhaps the Soviets are prepared to seek a way out.

It looks to me as if the West should stress the importance of the withdrawal of Soviet influence from the countries it has, to use Mr. Gladstone's phrase, "desecrated and despoiled" since 1974. Regional settlements must go hand in hand with arms control. I am not saying that they should be an integral part of arms negotiations, but I am saying that there should be linkage between them. If the Soviet attitudes are changing, and if we are up against a new era, this will be a test, and if it is proved, it is more than welcome.

However, let us be sure in our own minds that the Soviets have come to this point from the failure in their system at home, in competition with the West, and in consolidating their own empire. So that there is no need for us to pay for what they want to buy.

6.50 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): One of the interesting characteristics of this debate is that, although many references have been made to changes in the Soviet Union, and they have been interpreted by some speakers, few have spoken about the changes occurring in Britain. I believe that a profound change has occurred in this country, and that of the two visits—one by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to Washington and one by the Prime Minister to Moscow — the former was as significant as the latter. Both visits threw a light on the reality of the situation.

Strangely, as I entered the House, I opened a package containing the latest Gallup poll. I do not agree with polls much when it comes to election forecasts. However, before the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow, this poll asked the following question:

"Who do you think has done the most to try to reach agreements about controlling nuclear weapons—President Reagan or Mr. Gorbachev?"

The result was that 12 per cent. thought that President Reagan had done the most and 56 per cent. thought that Mr. Gorbachev had. As we are the British House of Commons, it might be worth spending a moment on these figures, which have been building up for some time, and examining the significance of the two visits at what is undoubtedly a turning point in terms of the way that the British people are assessing what is happening.

Since the end of the war, or shortly thereafter, there have been in British foreign and defence policy three basic assumptions, which I can easily rehearse. One was that the

Soviet Union would, if it had a chance, invade Western Europe, occupy West Germany, Italy, France, Norway and Sweden and come to Britain, except that we had the bomb, so it dared not do it. That assumption has appeared time and again. Indeed, somebody sent me the other day a letter that he had received from the Secretary of State for the Environment, which said:

"Thank you for your letter . . . I am certain that the Russians would have been here already if it wasn't for the West's nuclear deterrent."

That assumption is absolutely fundamental to the policy of the present Government and of successive Governments since the war.

The second argument is that the United States stands for peace, democracy and human rights all over the world. The third assumption is that the very existence of nuclear weapons is our security. The American nuclear umbrella keeps the Russians out, and our own nuclear weapons provide us with an ultimate safeguard. I put it to the House that none of those assumptions is true, and that the public is beginning to come to that conclusion.

Let us examine what price we are paying for those assumptions before I go into them in any detail. First, we carry a massive arms burden in Britain—far higher as a proportion of national income than any other European member of NATO. When I compare that with the burden that the Japanese carry, it does not surprise me that the Japanese can sell videos, cars, televisions and telephone equipment all over the world. Only 1·5 per cent. of their much bigger national income goes on defence, whereas in Britain it is about 6 per cent. of a smaller national income.

The arms burden has also cost many lives in other parts of the world. I did not believe the figures that I am about to quote when I first saw them. Every week, 250,000 babies die in the world from preventable diseases, while we waste masses of our resources, on both sides of the world, on these huge budgets, of which star wars is the most criminally wasteful.

The second price that we pay is that we accept in Britain the United States bases that can be used without the consent of the British Parliament. I am an old parliamentary historian, and I believe that we should not have a standing army. Every year, when we pass the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order, I regard it as a real order, which allows us to prevent, as the 17th century Parliament resolved to prevent, a standing army from remaining on our territory. However, we have a standing army of 30,000 American troops in 125 installations and, in the event of conflict, whole areas of our country would be handed over to American control. Short of a nuclear war, President Reagan felt able to use our bases for the Libyan bombing raid, primarily to show that there was some international support for his action.

There is something else that the people should know. We do not have an independent nuclear weapon. One of the reasons why the Zircon film aroused security questions was that in it a former senior civil servant in the Ministry of Defence made it clear that our so-called independent deterrent is not only American-built but requires the American satellite system to be used. We discovered that in 1964, when we came to power at the time that Polaris was about to come into service.

The third price that we pay for these three assumptions is the loss of the right to negotiate. I heard time and time again in the statements made about the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow that she was not negotiating, but that is because she is not allowed to do so. The only negotiations that take place between Britain and Russia go through Gorbachev and Reagan. Recently a German Member of Parliament from the Green party asked me how many people realised that the bloc system in Europe makes countries that have never had any clash of interest, such as Poland and Portugal, into enemies. Poland and Portugal can talk to each other only through Reagan and Gorbachev. I have heard it argued that our possession of weapons gives us a seat at the high table, but it does not, because our allegedly independent nuclear weapons do not give us the right to sit in when Reagan negotiates on our behalf.

The final and heaviest price that we pay is that we have lived under fear for 40 years. That fear has corrupted a great deal of our thinking about the future. When I listen to the cold war propaganda, which goes out all the time, I wonder how big a factor that is in the development of our domestic politics.

That fear is spread by untrue statements. I have never forgotten one occasion in Cabinet, when a defence White Paper was brought to us, which showed a massive superiority of Soviet conventional forces. One of my colleagues in the Cabinet asked, "Where are the French?" They had not been included in the balance of forces as if, in the event of war, one was not quite sure whether France would be on the side of Russia because it is not a military member of NATO. The BBC and the media pump out false figures about military balance because they want to keep people in the thrall of fear.

If those three assumptions are questioned, one opens up a new range of options. I believe that the Russians have not attacked Western Europe because, having lost 20 million people in the last war, they have no desire to do so. I have been to the Soviet Union on ministerial visits on many occasions and I have been to Leningrad and seen a city where as many people died as died in the entire British and American armies put together. One hears Russians speak about the war in a way that nobody who lived in an island that was only bombed but never occupied could, and that makes one realise that the need for peace in the Soviet Union is great.

That need for peace is not because the Soviet economy is breaking down. Actually, our economy is not all that successful, with 4 million rotting on the dole when there are so many needs to be met. Do not let us be so very superior about the success of our system of market forces.

Let us look back. The British sent an army to Russia to destroy the revolution. That is never mentioned on the radio. The forgery of the Zinoviev letter, and the Arcos raid are never mentioned either. And those who wish to be reminded of a bit of history, I shall read what Harry Truman was reported as having said in the *New York Times* in 1941:

"If we see that Germany is winning the war we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and in that way let them kill as many as possible."

That was said by the architect of NATO when a United States senator. The Russians do not forget that, and they do have anxieties about security. Any policy towards them must be based on that recognition.

I do not need to say in the House—I argued about it with the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) at the time of Suez—that when I was born we were an empire. I checked it out the other day. One fifth

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of the land space and population of the world was governed from this Chamber on the day that I was born. If we cannot recognise a new empire when it looms out of the mist, we must have forgotten our history. The Americans are an empire, and empires pursue policies—as our empire did—in support of its own economic interests.

The idea that the United States is in favour of human rights in Chile is an outrage. It toppled an elected Government and put Pinochet there to protect its economic investment. We did the same. When we were an empire, I remember, as a little boy, being taken to meet Mr. Gandhi when he came to London in 1931 for the round table conference. No Conservative Members talked about human rights in India then, because we were running India. When Mr. Gandhi was asked what he thought of civilisation in Britain, he replied "I think that it would be a very good idea." That was an accurate reflection of the way in which the Indians saw us.

The Americans went into Grenada; they support Botha; they back Turkey. They have no regard for human rights if they conflict with their interests. We were the same. The Russians, as a very powerful country, invaded and intervened in Hungary. As a Member of Parliament, I raised that in a letter to *Pravda*. I went with others, leading the Labour delegation at the time of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. It cannot be said that Britain's record on human rights, either present or historical, entitles us to say that "We will not talk to you until you recognise it."

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. His reputation on human rights is well known in all parts of the world. Is he aware that on 28 November 1973, when the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) was a junior Foreign Office Minister, he condoned what was happening in Chile after the coup, and said that Britain had no right to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries? Where can it be said that Tory Members are concerned about human rights outside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

Mr. Benn: I think that every major country must be very careful. When I was interviewed by the Moscow newspaper that was quoted against me, I said in respect of human rights:

"Frankly, I don't think any government in the world can be credited with outstanding achievements in this sphere."

That led to the Prime Minister beginning to draft a deportation order for me, as far as I could make out, but I made a true point. Those who believe in human rights do not have a double standard. They favour them wherever people in the so-called free world are threatened.

Other options are open. One that has been mentioned is the possibility of a Franco-German force de frappe. I have long been of the opinion that the Germans have the capacity to build nuclear weapons because of their high degree of skill. Ten years ago, as Energy Secretary, I stopped in Frankfurt on my way to Saudi Arabia and had lunch with the chairman of Nu-Kem, the German BNFL. He said that only 50 people would have to know if nuclear facilities were diverted from peace to war. With their arrangements with the Brazilians and others, I think that it is highly unlikely that the West Germans have no capacity to have the bomb anyway.

The question is, what should our policy be? I share the view of my right hon. Friends—expressed to a President who was exceedingly discourteous to them—that the policy they put forward is the right one. But, at the same time, we should look a little beyond that. I want to look as far ahead as I can. We still live under the legacy of Hitler, who divided Europe and left us with a divided Europe. Are we really to say that, into the 21st century, we are content to be lined up in blocs?

I went back to the treaty of friendship that we signed with the Russians in 1942. It was signed by Mr. Anthony Eden, who was later Prime Minister, and, on the other side, by Molotov. It dealt with wartime collaboration in the war against Hitler, and also with the post-war period. The words that I am going to read were signed by Eden and remained in force after we joined NATO:

"The High Contracting Parties: Desiring to contribute to the maintenance of Peace . . . to give expression to the intention to collaborate . . . in adopting proposals for common action to preserve Peace, and resist aggression, having regard to the interests of the security of each of them, agree to work together in close and friendly collaboration, for the organization of security and economic prosperity in Europe . . . will act in accordance with the two principles of not seeking territorial aggrandisement for themselves and of non-interference in the intended affairs of other States"——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): That rules out Afghanistan.

Mr. Benn: At least most of the people responsible for the Soviet intervention in Hungary are dead, whereas one of the arch-aggressors of the Suez invasion is still sitting on the Woolsack. Let us not lecture people about that.

The treaty continues:

"to render one another all possible economic assistance . . . undertakes not to conclude any alliance and not to take part in any coalition directed against the other High Contracting Party."

We should now build on the Moscow visit. I am not one of those who mock it, although it may not have had the intended effect. We should build on the visit by trying to renew the treaty of friendship signed by Eden, or by Winston Churchill, with the Soviet Union during the war. In place of the ghastly bloc system, in which I have no confidence, we should start to build bilaterals in Europe. Mr. Papandreou has gone to Bulgaria—one party from NATO, the other from the Warsaw pact—and signed an agreement with Zhivkov. The West Germans and the East Germans are now working together. I should like us to move out of the bloc system towards a European security that recognises the specific and distinct interests of every European country. Such a treaty could be signed on a much more multilateral basis by an assertion of bilateral agreement. If we did that, we could reallocate resources to meet the real threat to the survival of humanity—the threat posed by starvation in the Third world—and reduce arms expenditure.

I do not agree, and nor did the Labour party conference, with the view that every penny to be saved from nuclear weapons should be spent on conventional weapons. The motion for transferring resources was carried at the conference by 5 million votes to one. The policy that was put forward at conference is the correct one.

Mr. Amery: The right hon. Gentleman read to us the terms of the Anglo-Soviet agreement, and there would be much to be said for it if it was honoured and respected. He

took as one example the Soviet intervention in Hungary, and brushed it aside by talking about what we did at Suez. However, he said nothing about the defenestration of Mr. Masaryk in Prague. The right hon. Gentleman said nothing about the events in Poland, or about the invasion of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. The Russians cannot be said to have respected the terms of any agreement. That is why the bloc system has come into being.

Mr. Benn: I quoted the report of my interview in the Moscow paper, in which I said that no great power has a very good human rights record. I did not know whether the question would be raised, but I looked up the letter that five or six of us wrote to *Pravda* at the time of the invasion of Hungary. We said:

"We protest against Soviet intervention in Hungary, because we think it wrong for any great power to impose its will on a small country for strategic or any other reasons. For this very reason we condemned the Anglo-French attack on Egypt."

The Prime Minister has done so much to undermine human rights and civil liberties in Britain. She said that the Russians have agreed to stop jamming the BBC, but the Government have been jamming the BBC by sending in the security services. When the Russians stopped jamming the BBC the Prime Minister started jamming it. Human rights cannot be used as an argument for deferring progress on disarmament.

The assumptions upon which Britain's post-war foreign and defence policies have rested are no longer true: that the Russians have ever wanted to invade, that the Americans are the defenders of freedom and that nuclear weapons — particularly after Chernobyl — provided an element of stability in the world. The time is coming—it may come after the next general election, but I am also looking towards the 21st century—when we shall have to replace the bloc system and the arms race, including the nuclear arms race, with a British policy that is designed to bridge the gap between East and West and to narrow the gap between the north and the south that is caused by poverty. Apart from the injustice that it creates, that, too, in the end could be the ultimate cause of a war that would destroy humanity.

7.12 pm

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): I hope that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will forgive me if I do not follow him down all the paths that he has travelled, some of which were very esoteric. However, I do not disagree with him that the last war left a scar on the Soviet Union that has not yet healed.

Several of my hon. Friends have rightly paid tribute to the remarkable and highly successful visit to the Soviet Union by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. They were not joined by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). I have considerable respect and, indeed, affection for him, although I do not approve of his present posture on defence. In his knockabouts he can be excellent and extremely funny, but today he was not up to his usual standard.

It is not unreasonable to hope that, as a result of the visit and the long and wide ranging talks, progress will follow on a number of important issues. My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the talks held in Moscow about the middle east. Progress towards peace in the middle east would be as important an achievement as any. It is an area of continuing and acute tension and a major international conflict could still be triggered off there. Advance to a settlement has been lamentably slow, and one significant cause for the paralysis has been the determination of the United States Administration to exclude the Soviet Union from the peace process. This has been an attitude lacking in statesmanship and vision, because the Soviet Union could make a valuable contribution to progress and, just as easily, could impede the peace process. Of course, that is not the only or the most important aspect of American foreign policy in the middle east that has continued to demoralise not only those of us who are anxious to see progress towards peace but also those of us who wish to see Western influence in the area preserved and strengthened.

The main cause of the failure of American policy has been its incapacity to provide any semblance of an even-handed approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Its blind support for Israel, irrespective of the circumstances, has lost it both credibility and influence. There are, however, some new factors and some recent developments that are perhaps worth looking at. It is, for instance, conceivable that Irangate and the Pollard affair may have just begun to shake the stranglehold that the Zionist lobby in Washington has held for so long. In Irangate, for instance, it became increasingly clear, as the story emerged, that Israel played a major and invidious role in it.

What is particularly striking about this—as the late David Watt, who will be sadly missed, wrote in one of his last articles in *The Times*—was the ease with which the Israelis were able to play on the United States Administration's weaknesses for their own ends. Equally remarkable, he pointed out, was the kid-gloved caution with which most of the American media treated this aspect of the affair. He concluded that anybody who has worked in Washington or New York knows the reasons: the Israeli lobby has established an unrivalled position of power over the years. The question we should now be asking ourselves is whether this lobby has been undermined. Just conceivably it has been, and that would be a hopeful development. It is at least worth trying to find out.

I have often argued in the past few years that the only way in which progress could start to be made towards a middle east settlement would be through an international conference and that the participation of the Soviet Union in such a conference was essential. That it will now come about seems far more likely. A real opportunity has opened up, whereby my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, before or after the general election, might be able to persuade President Reagan to support such an endeavour. But an international conference would make progress only if serious preparatory work were carried out in advance. Here again, Britain and the EEC have a significant role to play.

The most recent EEC communiqué on the middle east was realistic and positive, addressing itself—as it did—to the fundamental issues that needed to be resolved. It is encouraging that Mr. Tindemans is shortly to embark on a fact-finding tour of the area. He should, however, add Syria to his itinerary if he wants to understand and influence the Arab side.

If it proved possible to establish a shared Arab negotiating position, an important step towards a successful conference would have been taken. The essential

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people in formulating such an accord, who would also be key participants, would be King Hussein, President Assad and of course the Palestinians.

Even more important and much more difficult is to persuade Israel to make the territorial concessions necessary for a successful peace settlement. Only the United States has the leverage which could make Israel move. The question is, will it exercise such leverage? There is no doubt that territory in exchange for peace remains the only realistic basis for successful negotiations. After 20 years, the implementation of resolution 242 still is at the heart of the solution. An international consensus on this point exists and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister might be able to convince President Reagan and his advisers that one state should not be allowed to veto a settlement. Here lies the key to peace in the middle east.

Shortage of time prevents me from touching on the Iran-Iraq war except to say that, although separate, it is part of the same malady which pervades the whole area. The resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict would have a decisive influence on the war and greatly weaken the threat of expanding and aggressive Islamic fundamentalism.

The outlook for a settlement since 1982, the year of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, has been exceedingly bleak. There are now some windows which show signs that they may conceivably be prised open. The EEC and Britain in particular are in a unique position to assist in doing so.

Next year will mark the 40th anniversary of the tragic ending of the British mandate in Palestine, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Sir C. Mather) referred. It would be wholly right and appropriate if by then British and European diplomatic action had succeeded in establishing a process of negotiation which was making progress. Thereby we could redeem at least part of our failure in Palestine and go some way towards fulfilling our mandatory obligations to the Palestinian people.

7.22 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): The response of the Prime Minister to her recent visit to the Soviet Union was perhaps the most interesting aspect of it. Of course, she planned the visit and the programme with an eye to impressing the British electorate and she returned flushed with her success, as she saw it, in that respect, because she had enormous television coverage and the impression she wished to convey—that of a world statesman—perhaps came over to the public. But I think that that could be quite short-lived.

What interests me more is the feeling the right hon. Lady gained from her visit. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) mentioned the Inter-Parliamentary Union trip in May and June last year under the leadership of the deputy Prime Minister which followed the same pattern almost as the Prime Minister's visit. That was not my first visit to the Soviet Union either. My own experience and feelings stem from visits beginning as long ago as 1960 when I was a trade unionist.

No one can visit the Soviet Union without being impressed by the desire of the ordinary people for peace and friendship with the world and in particular with the West. There is no anti-American or anti-British feeling there. Their concern for peace stems from the suffering which they went through in what they refer to as the great patriotic war and the struggle that they have had to rebuild their country since 1945. They do not want to go through all that again. They do not want to launch any war against the West. They are very anxious to build bridges. I hope that the Prime Minister at least gained that impression from her visit to the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister did not quite follow the complete pattern of the IPU visit because we went to Leningrad. A visit to Leningrad is a valuable experience in the education of anyone from the West because we do not realise the struggle that the people of that city went through in the 900-day siege during the last war: the starvation in the city, the pitifully small rations, the deaths. No one who has visited the mass graves, as the IPU delegation did, could fail to be impressed by the fact that more than 600,000 people were buried in that cemetery in huge mass graves. That is just about half the number who lost their lives in Leningrad.

I was there with a young woman of perhaps 30 years of age who was visiting the memorial. A film was shown of what happened during the siege and that girl was in tears. As far as I know, she was not Left wing in her political views. I have no reason to think that she was anything other than what an Oxford graduate might be expected to be—perhaps at least moderate in her views. She said that what struck her most of all was that, although she had been given perhaps as good an education as it is possible to get in this country, she knew nothing of the sufferings, the struggle and the tremendous resistance of the people not only in Leningrad but in dozens, perhaps hundreds, of towns and cities similarly placed throughout the Soviet Union.

One has to understand that background when one goes to the Soviet Union and tries to talk to its leader. This desire for peace did not begin with the arrival of General Secretary Gorbachev at the top of the political tree in the Societ Union. It has been there certainly as long as I have been visiting that country, and it is very deep-rooted and sincere.

Mr. Gorbachev has put proposals on the table in a very imaginative way in an attempt to achieve some movement in the West towards agreement. There was the moratorium on nuclear tests, for instance, which went on for over 18 months, without the slightest sign of response from the United States or Britain, and was broken only when the United States began its new series of tests. Then there were the proposals Mr. Gorbachev made in January of last year and those he made at Reykjavik when he met President Reagan. None of them was responded to as it should have been.

Now we have our Prime Minister going to the Soviet Union, and that is where her dilemma arose. She was perhaps satisfied that she had had a lot of television coverage and that the impression was given that something had been achieved. But the poverty of the achievements was revealed today when we heard the Foreign Secretary again try to outline what they were. There was the initialling of agreements on trade. Of course we welcome that, but there is much room for improvement in our trading position with the Soviet Union. We need only to discuss it with the British Soviet Chamber of Commerce to understand that our share of the market has been dwindling over the years and that our place has been taken by other western European countries.

There is a suggestion that there will be new embassies. That is welcome, of course. I hope that when the new

embassy for the Soviet Union is built we do not have the absurd hullabaloo that there was in Kensington last time. These are small matters internationally. The fact that they have to be emphasised as achievements of the visit drew attention to what had not been achieved.

What has happened once again is that the Prime Minister has come back determined to emphasise that she, if no one else, believes that nuclear weapons are a good thing. When she said that on Soviet television, I am sure that the people could not believe their ears. That is the same as saying that the future of humanity does not matter. The Prime Minister has made that clear even on her return from the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister put all sorts of obstacles in the way of achieving the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

She mentioned human rights. Of course we are all concerned about human rights. I suppose that every hon. Member has received letters about the treatment not just of Jews in the Soviet Union but of others. If other hon. Members are like me, they have taken up the matters in the appropriate place and tried to help. But to suggest that it is impossible to reach agreement on nuclear weapons and disarmament with a country which has people whom we think of as political prisoners is nonsense.

The Government, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary achieved an excellent agreement with the Chinese People's Republic about the future of Hong Kong and the 4·5 million who live there, irrespective of the fact that they were dealing in the Chinese People's Republic with a Government who certainly have political prisoners and certainly have abused human rights. Yet, despite our disagreement with them, agreement was possible on Hong Kong. If we are not to negotiate with any country that has political prisoners, we will cut down sharply on the number of countries with which we can negotiate.

The Government say that the Russians must come out of Afghanistan before it is possible to believe that they will keep their word. It has suddenly been discovered that the Russians would like to come out of Afghanistan. I invite hon. Members to read the debate which took place at the time of the Soviet Union intervention in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union never wanted to go there in the first place. It was not an invasion. The Russians had lived in peace and harmony with Afghanistan for more than 50 years. It was the first country with which they have signed a pact of friendship.

Those who think that Afghanistan was a heaven on earth before 1978 have never been there, as I have. I was there before the Russian intervention when the country was under the dictatorship of Daud. It was one of the most backward countries in the world with its illiteracy, its treatment of women and its record on human rights. Hon. Members should examine the record of the Daud Administration. Let us set that aside. There are hon. Members who know very well that the Soviet Union was asked on at least three occasions to intervene in Afghanistan. When I was speaking in the debate at that time, I was told by some hon. Members that the Russians had been asked many more times to intervene before they were finally persuaded to help the Afghanistan Government.

The Russians want to get out as soon as foreign intervention in Afghanistan ceases. By that I mean, of course, the assistance given by the dollars that are sent to the Afghan rebels through Pakistan. All that is open now, although there was an attempt in 1979 to suggest that there was no such intervention.

In any case, what has all that to do with us reaching agreement with the Russians? It has been mentioned in the debate that there was a lull in the arms race at the time of Nixon. The Soviet Union was prepared to deal with President Nixon despite the fact that the Americans had troops in Vietnam to whom the Soviet Union had as much objection as we have to the Russian troops in Afghanistan, but they did not let that stand in the way of negotiations with Nixon. They realised that world disarmament and the survival of the human race stand above such differences.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has already said a great deal of what I intended to say. I agree wholeheartedly with the point he made about the need to use any money we can save from the arms race for constructive purposes, particularly in the Third world. We speak so smugly about 40 years of peace in Europe having been achieved by this tremendous expenditure on nuclear weapons, but that peace has not been achieved without deaths being caused in the Third world. The Russians are just as much at fault as we are. Of world expenditure on arms, 80 per cent. was and is made by the nations who signed the Helsinki final act in 1975. There has been no improvement in 12 years. Those who suffer in the arms race are the millions who go to bed hungry, who have no proper health provision and who have no proper water supply, and the children who die in thousands every day because of the lack of proper facilities, all of which could be provided easily out of the unnecessary expenditure on arms by the Americans, the Soviet Union and ourselves.

Government supporters may think that that is an amusing and idealistic view; they may say that my feet are not on the ground because there will always be an arms race in the real world. We must speak out against it. We must make it clear that we do not accept the inevitability of the arms race and that we can help the Third world. Our foreign policy should be based firmly on that. The big arms manufacturers in the United States and here must have an enemy so as to frighten the people of this country and the United States into providing the money for the profits that they make from the arms race.

If the Soviet Union disappeared as an enemy and there was subsequent pressure on the United States, Britain and other countries to reduce the amount spent on defence, a fresh enemy would have to be found. In the next century perhaps that enemy will be pinpointed as the Third world. The poor and the have-nots who make up 80 per cent. of the world will ask why the other 20 per cent. should consume 80 per cent. of the world's provisions. They will then be shown to be the enemy and we will have to arm to the teeth to guard against them. If that is the future, it is very bleak. This is a turning point and an opportunity to cut arms expenditure and use it for far better purposes.

7.40 pm

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) referred to the desire for peace of the ordinary people of the Soviet Union. I hope that they will soon be able to express their views on peace because until now they have not had that opportunity. In contrast to what I understood to be the impression of the hon. Member of the consequences of the Prime Minister's interview with the three Soviet

[Sir Peter Blaker]

journalists, I believe that that remarkable interview helped to get across to the Soviet people and their leaders our desire in the West for peace. The Soviets have not had the opportunity yet to hear that point of view. That is a breakthrough. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other western leaders will be able to express their views on Soviet television again.

It has been observed that we may be at a favourable turning point in East-West relations. That may well be so. There are indications that the Soviet Union and the West now simultaneously have a desire to negotiate on the same subjects. There is evidence that Mr. Gorbachev sincerely wants to achieve radical changes in the economy and political scene in the Soviet Union and also to make advances—modest though they are so far—in human rights.

I assume for the purpose of my argument that the speech that was made by Mr. Gorbachev last spring at the 27th Soviet Communist Congress may indicate that he is beginning to come to the conclusion that the positive, forward-thrusting attitude of the Soviet Communist party until now towards the rest of the world, its assumption that the destiny of Soviet Communism is to supplant eventually the systems in the free countries and the dogma that has existed ever since the Russian revolution of 1917, can be the cause of world friction. Let us hope that Mr. Gorbachev may be realising that circumstances in the world are changing in such a way that it is time that that dogma should be abandoned. If that were to happen, it would be a breakthrough of enormous significance.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) in his interesting speech said that our task is to survive in unity and freedom until the Soviet rulers come to this conclusion. Assuming that there are these favourable developments in the Soviet Union and in the international scene, we should ask what factors have led to these better East-West relations. I refer to three factors. The first has been the firmness and unity of the West. The Soviet strategy has been and is now to divide the West.

I have taken part in negotiations for some years with the Soviet Union on arms limitation. Its strategy in those negotiations and in other negotiations that I have observed has been to see whether it can divide the Western countries from one another. Only when they fail in that effort do they get down to serious negotiation. The greatest danger to the West and to Western Europe is not that of war, as long as we are reasonably sensible in maintaining our defences and our resolution. The greatest danger is political division between Western countries. If that occurred, the Soviet Union would end up by dominating Western Europe as it has for so many years dominated Eastern Europe.

The unity of the West in relation to the introduction of cruise and Pershing missiles has been very important. If we had succumbed to the threats of the Soviet Union about the dire consequences of persisting in our policies of bringing in those missiles to match the existing SS20s on the Soviet sites, there would have been a profound loss of confidence and division between the NATO countries, and there would have been no negotiations on independent nuclear forces in Europe. The Soviet Union would not have needed to negotiate. It could have kept its SS20s and other missiles without the need for any negotiation at all.

The second factor for this more favourable situation is the economic failure of the Soviet Union. Nowhere in the world is there a Socialist economic system that works. The Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe, France in the first years of the Mitterrand Administration, Tanzania and others—all those countries are realising that Socialism is a flop and they have to seek better systems based on human incentives. Mr. Gorbachev sees the need to invigorate the Soviet system by moving in that direction. I hope that he also sees a need for a reduction in the massive Soviet spending on arms of between 13 and 15 per cent. of Soviet GDP.

Mr. Winnick: The right hon. Member has spoken of Socialist systems. I agree that an overcentralised and largely bureaucratic economic system is not likely to work, but does the right hon. Member not accept that under the capitalist system, leaving aside what happened before the second world war, there remains in the advanced capitalist countries—certainly in Britain and the United States—great poverty, deprivation and misery, and also in many Third world countries that are far from Marxist?

Sir Peter Blaker: There is an analogy with what Sir Winston Churchill said—that the system of democracy has many disadvantages but there is no system that is not even worse. Capitalism may have many problems and disadvantages but there is no better system; every other system is worse.

The third factor that has helped to created better East-West relations is the role of Her Majesty's Government—especially relevant during a time when the United States Government has had more than its share of problems in its international policy. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on his role in giving greater emphasis since 1983 to dialogue with the Soviet Union. The former Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East, said that he had planned to visit the countries of Eastern Europe. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has visited every country in Eastern Europe. He has had 12 meetings with successive Soviet Foreign Ministers and has not spared himself in the cause of promoting dialogue with the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister's trip to Moscow must be seen as the culmination of a process that has been continuing ever since the beginning of this Parliament. One of the main features of the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow will prove to be the particular relationship—I use the word "particular" rather than "special" because I might cause confusion if I applied that word to this relationship—that has developed between her and Mr. Gorbachev. They are able to discuss without rancour matters on which they differ profoundly. That is a unique relationship to develop between a Western leader and a leader of the Soviet Union. I can think of no other relationship of that sort. The relationship potentially has very great importance for East-West relations and for peace over the years ahead.

One component of that remarkable relationship is the recognition by Mr. Gorbachev of the Prime Minister's ability—which has been demonstrated on a number of occasions—to persuade President Reagan to adopt practical, sensible and workable policies on matters of importance in the context of East-West relations. I am particularly thinking of the two Camp David meetings

that the Prime Minister had with President Reagan, one of which was about SDI in December 1984 and the other after the Reykjavik summit in 1986.

What a contrast we have seen between the successful policies of Her Majesty's Government in the context of East-West relations, defence and disarmament and the chaos on the Opposition Benches. The Leader of the Opposition endorses NATO, but rejects its policies. He accepts the protection of the United States, but only if the United States protects us in the way that he wants. So far as I can make sense of his policies, they involve depriving our forces in Germany of the protection of nuclear weapons while neighbouring allied troops have those nuclear weapons. In one of his most recent statements, the Leader of the Opposition said that a Labour Government would not insist on American nuclear forces being withdrawn from this country so long as negotiations between East and West were continuing. That reveals the fundamental weakness of the Labour party's position. I do not believe that this point has been made yet—if it has been made, it has not been made firmly enough and should be repeated regularly. If we had a Labour Government with basic policies of ejecting American nuclear forces from this country and throwing away our own nuclear defences, the Soviet Union—if it was then engaged in negotiations—would only have to terminate negotiations with the United States to achieve its objective. It would not need to negotiate to get what it wanted. It could get that through no effort on its part. There would be no incentive for the Soviet Union to continue negotiations. The reality of the Labour party position is that it wants to eject all nuclear weapons from this country as fast as possible.

The pretence in the Labour party position that a Labour Government would so increase our conventional forces that nuclear deterrents would become irrelevant is wholly fraudulent. That simply cannot be achieved within our budget even if—contrary to the wishes of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) as expressed this afternoon—the Labour Government saved the money to be spent on Trident and put it to building up our conventional forces. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) knows that the Labour policy is nonsense. When addressing audiences in the United States he tries to pretend that Labour's policies are different from what they really are, but that only makes the confusion worse.

I am sorry that no representative of the Liberal party or the Social Democratic party is present in the Chamber. This debate has been marked by a total absence of any SDP Member apart from a rapid visit by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) who came in for about five minutes some two and a half hours after the beginning of the debate, but was whisked away by the leader of the Liberal party to some destination, we know not where. One member of the Liberal party was present. I reflected while the spokesman on foreign affairs, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), was speaking on defence and disarmament negotiations that it was a pity that he did not have some of his Liberal colleagues with him in the Chamber so that we could hear about their policies and learn how they differed from the policies of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. That would have been an interesting debate. It would have been even more interesting if the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) had been present to add his version which, of course, is wholly different from that of any member of the Liberal party. I can sum up the position of the Liberal and Social Democrat parties—so far as the Liberals have a coherent position at all—by saying that the Liberal party is against nuclear deterrence and the SDP is in favour of it. Therefore, they compromise on the basis of two words: "don't know". It is certain that after the election, whatever the result may be, the first thing that will happen will be civil war between the two different parties in the alliance.

If the Labour party or the alliance had been in power for the past seven or eight years, would we now be in this favourable international position in the context of East-West relations? I believe that the confusion and disarray that would very likely have existed in that period would have meant that the Soviet Union would have felt it unnecessary to make any concessions. It would not have felt impelled towards the fruitful developments we have seen in the Soviet Union in recent times.

Would Mr. Gorbachev have seen the necessity to reform Soviet society if NATO had been in disarray? Would he not have waited to see what happened on the Western side? The answer it perfectly clear. NATO's firmness and unity have helped to bring the Soviet Union to negotiations as Conservative Members forecast in the years 1979 to 1983. Mr. Gorbachev has given the conclusive answer to the women of Greenham common.

7.57 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): I was delighted to hear the Foreign Secretary say that his recent visit with the Prime Minister to the USSR was

"certainly an important opportunity to bring our two countries and our peoples together".

I was also delighted to learn that the Prime Minister said that she was

"struck by the spontaneous warmth and friendliness of my reception by the people of the Soviet Union".—[*Official Report*, 2 April 1987; Vol. 113, c. 1225.]

That is a good start to warmer relations and a better understanding of the Soviet Union and her people.

Had the Prime Minister had an open mind about the Soviet Union, she need not have been so struck, for she would have known that already. My visits to the Soviet Union extend over many years from the late 1950s and early 1960s and they have shown me how warm-hearted the Soviet people are. Last June, during the visit of the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation of which I had the privilege to be a member—a delegation led by Lord Whitelaw—we saw again the spontaneous friendship and goodwill towards us.

The Soviet people, of course, have poignant memories of the sacrifices that they made in defending their country against facism and they are ever grateful to us for the help that we were able to give. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) referred to the destruction and appalling loss of life suffered by the Soviet people followed by many long years of sacrifice in order to build up their country again. We should be ever mindful of their sacrifice. They are grateful for the help that we were able to give in defeating Hitler's evil regime. We should always remember the comradeship that bound us together over those years during the war and in the years afterwards.

When she came back from Moscow, the Prime Minister stressed the Helsinki agreement and of course we support that agreement. In June, when we talked to him about

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those matters, Mr. Gorbachev gave us the same reply that he gave to the Prime Minister. Since then a number of so-called dissidents have been released and reunited with their families and some Soviet husbands have been reunited with their British wives. We hope that this process will continue and I have every confidence that it will.

Before I went to Moscow many cases were raised with me by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. These cases were raised with Mr. Gorbachev and we drew attention to the plight of Soviet psychiatrists and others being held against their will, clearly for no other reason than that they held unconventional political views. As a result of our representations a number of Jews were released and given exit permits. This process must continue. All these changes will make for better relations with the Soviet Union, and I am confident that with Mr. Gorbachev in power this lessening of tension and the release of people from prison will continue.

I am rather disturbed that the Prime Minister made no reference to British-Soviet co-operation in the general disciplines of science and technology. This is a very important way of building bonds and links between the two countries, and Soviet scientists are very keen to see those links developed. We were told this when we met Soviet scientists at various meetings. They are anxious to co-operate and work with our scientists, but that requires resources to enable Soviet scientists to come and work here. This ought to be part of our programme. There is no doubt that collaboration and contacts in these fields have been reduced since 1979, largely as a result of the negative attitude of the British Government.

I know a good deal about the construction industry. It is trying to produce a new system of Euro codes through co-operation with member states of the European Community. The Soviet Union is involved in this development of Euro codes and has taken part in the Commité Européen du Béton. The new Euro codes are based on the scientific work of international and professional organisations of which the Soviet Union and most other Socialist countries in Europe are members, together with our representatives and those of other Common Market countries.

What is the Prime Minister and the Government doing to reactivate scientific contacts with the Soviet Union? I hope that the Government will regard these as important ways of developing more bonds between our practical scientists and our technologists in ways that will benefit both our peoples. Until recently, student exchanges between us and the USSR were hampered by inadequate financial support from the Government. The sum of £1,906 per annum per student was allowed. That was about £400 less than the amount assessed by university departments as being necessary to maintain students here and allow them to take part in journeys in Britain to visit cultural establishments, theatres and so on. However, I am glad to hear that this amount is to be increased to £2,246 from next September. I hope that this will enable many more students from the Soviet Union to spend some time here.

Contacts between young people are among the best ways of pursuing a fruitful and friendly policy towards other countries. The British Council has played an important part in enabling young people to go to the Soviet Union to study, but the council's resources have been reduced by the Government. I hope that we can persuade the Government to look again at the resources made available to the British Council.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister about an increase in Government financial help towards the £500,000 that is the cost of exchange between the National theatre and the Mayakovsky theatre in Moscow. This is chickenfeed, a tiny amount of money. The Government have offered the miserable sum of £12,500. In view of the Chancellor's recent £6 billion bribe to the electorate, surely the Government can do better than that miserable amount. I hope that the matter will be looked at again so that an additional amount can be made available to allow this exchange to take place. It will be an exciting, stimulating and fruitful exchange between two nationally famous and internationally regarded theatres.

Cultural agreements are very important, especially for improving our relations and furthering a positive foreign policy. However, such agreements are pointless unless they are backed with resources that will make them effective. Cultural contacts with the Soviet Union have largely been conducted by voluntary organisations such as the British-Soviet Friendship Society, of which I am vice-president, and the Society for Cultural Relations. To be effective both rely on the goodwill of their members. The Foreign Office was and is indifferent to such efforts.

Another organisation in which many of us are interested is the Great Britain-USSR trade delegation. Representatives of our best industries are keen to develop trade, and that is valuable for both sides. I hope that the Government will provide more resources to enable that organisation to be more effective. I take issue with the statement made by the Prime Minister that it had taken her quite a time

"to turn Britain round from Socialism to a country with a high standard of living, . . . strong defence . . . Therefore, it will take much longer to turn round the Soviet system."
—[*Official Report*, 2 April 1987; Vol. 113, c. 1237.]

She has got a hope coming, because she will not turn round the Soviet system and I doubt whether anybody else will. I do not think that Mr. Gorbachev is unaware of the prominence of this country. Have we a high standard of living, a strong defence? I think that he knows better than that, just as we do. I doubt whether he would be any more pleased than we are at her interpretation of Britain after years of her Government. There are nearly 4 million people unemployed. There are threats to reduce benefit to young people and others, we have a depleted Navy and merchant marine, and a huge gap between the well-off and the poor in respect of health, housing and jobs.

The Prime Minister's talk of turning round the Soviet system is not exactly a good foundation on which to build better relations and a more constructive foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. One hopes that she will learn sense before too long. For the peace of the world a constructive foreign policy that recognises the positive aspects of the new leadership in the Soviet Union is essential and could bring enormous benefit to all of us. That is what we all must build on.

8.7 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): It is always a pleasure to follow a speech by the hon. Lady the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short). She and I, together with my noble Friend Lord Whitelaw, went on

the IPU delegation to the Soviet Union. We all came back with an intimate, if not privileged, impression of the amount of change that was going on there and the degree of opportunity for progress in disarmament that now exists between East and West. In the main, the hon. Lady made a constructive contribution to this debate. We are well aware of the good work that she does for Anglo-Soviet relations which she has been doing for many years.

I do not wish to take up much time, because many of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members wish to contribute to the debate. I shall headline points and not embellish them to too great an extent. As I have said, the present situation is extremely promising and there is virtually a unique opportunity for progress. However, to my mind, the present situation is more than a little dangerous, not in terms of simple danger but because of the real possibility that between us all we could fail to take one of the greatest historical opportunities to make progress in disarmament that has existed in my lifetime.

That great opportunity has been there for some years. It has not just sprung up but has even been reflected in my speeches in the House in successive foreign affairs debates since 1984. It precedes Mr. Gorbachev and, apart from defence policy, the reason for it is simple and has been developing within the Soviet Union. Basically, it is that the economy of the Soviet Union is not working and the cost of the arms race is increasing, not only in terms of nuclear potential but because of the enormously increasing cost of conventional armaments. Mr. Gorbachev is introducing many dramatic suggestions. It was his mentor, Mr. Andropov, who, for a brief period, represented the beginning of this current opportunity which exists in East-West relations.

As to the West, while I agree with many of the points that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) made about the need for the unity of the West, the question which must be posed is whether the strain of maintaining that unity will cause us to lose out on the existing opportunity. The West has not got its act together in that regard to the extent that I should like. I shall draw attention to certain specifics of which the strategic defence initiative is paramount. That is utterly wrong because it threatens the progress of negotiations. It is a new chapter in the arms race, as I have said before in some detail. There are grave European misgivings about it which go far beyond the officially spoken word of many western European and NATO countries.

As to the ABM treaty, the broad interpretation to many of us appears to be illegal and certainly against its spirit. The reason for my saying that is that progress on strategic arms, which must be at the pinnacle of disarmament, is in doubt while we have the strategic defence initiative in its present form, because the Soviet Union will rely, in default of technological advantage in this sector, on a policy of saturation. Therefore, the programme will be put out of sequence. With a strategic stalemate we start to look desperately for progress in any area.

I would go along with any suggestion that represented progress, but I should like to make it clear to the House—here I may appear to be speaking against the INF agreement—that I am a package man. The negotiations should be conducted as a package—these remarks are addressed to Capitol Hill and the White House as much as they are to hon. Members. We should be negotiating strategic arms and the strategic defence initiative at the pinnacle. We should also be negotiating on short-range missiles, chemical warfare and other aspects which have been mentioned by hon. Members.

That brings me to the Soviet INF offer. Here I would accept and advocate progress. I do not want hon. Members to get wrong what I am about to say. I would take the risk and have the progress, but we must remind ourselves—this point has not been made as much as it should be—that taken alone the INF offer represents, from the Soviet point of view, a brilliantly timed offer. It hits at the soft underbelly of the West's desperate desire for progress, which is often frustrated, in European eyes, by its differences with Washington. Europe is looking for progress and the United States, because of Irangate, is desperately looking for progress, not least for presidential credibility. Taken separately, it must be to the Soviet advantage.

The INF proposal detaches the United States from Europe. We all remember the battles to install these weapons in the first place. A major Soviet fear is removed of the presence with a nuclear capability of the United States on non-American soil. An American missile five minutes from Moscow was always the major fear of the Soviet Union in this regard. It was in the context of encirclement, and anybody who has been there will know what I am talking about. An intermediate range missile operated by the United States is what the Soviet Union would term as a free shot within Europe. The Soviet Union regard that as an unfair advantage.

The INF offer leaves the Soviets with an advantage as to short range superiority, unless negotiations rapidly follow. In view of the general situation, and in spite of that, I would still like to make every possible progress on the INF offer. But once one gets out of the proper sequence of disarmament, and because it is not within our power in this House to control that sequence, we may be asking for more trouble than some of us bargain for.

The Soviet Union wants to progress in these negotiations. The scale of change in the Soviet Union over the last two years is staggering to behold. I refer to the policies of openness and reconstruction, the massive dismissals, and the massive political and commercial changes. In his speech at the last party congress the Soviet leader actually denounced the system for not working and referred to such matters as corruption. He announced matters which none of us imagined would have been announced so quickly—multi-candidate elections within the party and the republics. The pilots to those elections have been announced. The point of this is not to sing the praises of what is happening so quickly, but to say that by any standards it is formidable if not fantastic in our conceptions of the Soviet Union and its system. It has created many problems in the Soviet Union, and anyone with any knowledge or feeling of that system must realise that any leader who introduces such matters so quickly needs to make progress. In the introduction of them he has made many enemies within one of the most conservative systems in the world.

If the West ignores the need within the Soviet Union to make international progress, and ignores the degree to which the proverbial neck has been stuck out, it does so at its peril. There is nothing permanent about the offer, and while we may be arguing about the minutiae among ourselves in an effort to get a united approach against something which on this side of the Atlantic, let alone on

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the other side, sounds rather strange—with this mass of offers—if we delay too long those offers may not be there.

I want to address myself to the United Kingdom role in all of this and to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her visit. Personal relations are important in foreign affairs and she obviously has a formidable relationship with Mr. Gorbachev.

Internationally, with regard to the British role, we must make vigorous representations to Washington and, dare I say it, I should like to see my right hon. Friend putting in nine, 10 or 11 hours with President Reagan as much as I would with Mr. Gorbachev—or rather I should say President Reagan and his advisers.

As to Europe, there is an undoubted need for greater defence co-operation. I welcome the speech that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary made in that regard in the last fortnight. What I am saying mirrors certain feelings that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) expressed in his speech. I would differ from him by saying that for such a contribution to be effective it must be a European rather than a British contribution, even in a multilateral context. If NATO is to survive as an Alliance, it must become more equal, and that means that we must have a more vigorous European defence policy.

There are enormous trade opportunities in our bilateral relations with the Soviet Union. We should trade with the Soviet Union, even if the result of that trade is that it becomes stronger in the sense that it becomes our commercial rather than military competitor.

We must continue to press on matters of human rights, but we must recognise what has already been done and allow time for changes within the Soviet system to take effect. We must press but we must not overdo it.

One of the best gestures that the Soviet Union made before the Prime Minister's visit—which it substantiated afterwards—was that there should be no jamming of the BBC Russian service. That was a formidable gesture.

I gave notice to my hon. Friend the Minister of State that I would mention the BBC external service and satellite television services. Early-day motion 846, an all-Conservative motion, had attracted 108 signatures by this morning and has gathered more. It reflects concern that the United Kingdom should not lose out by delaying a decision, bearing in mind that other countries are rapidly expanding their satellite television news services. We seem to be delaying the decision. Early-day motion 852, an all-party motion with widespread support, had attracted 157 signatures this morning and has since gathered more. That states that the BBC, through its outstanding record and international credibility, is by far the best instrument to put Britain's case abroad. Of my hon. Friends who signed the general motion I am pleased to say that 75 per cent. also signed the all-party, BBC-oriented motion. I invite the Minister of State to refer to that in his reply.

I have been as brief as I can and I end where I began. We must make progress. The opportunity is there, and history will judge the western Alliance harshly if we do not take advantage of it.

8.22 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): As day succeeds day the faces of the hostages in the Lebanon fade from our memory. As week succeeds week their names also fade. The name that most people remember is that of Terry Waite. Many of the hostages are as much hostages of American policy as they are of the groups that hold them. Apparently, while claiming to oppose terrorism, the Americans were prepared to treat with terrorists behind the scenes when that served their own selfish interests. The Americans are no strangers to dealing with terrorists as they showed by their sleazy deals with the Contras.

It is not surprising that small terrorist groups in the Lebanon saw their opportunity and that the more cash and guns were handed out by the Americans, the more the currency in hostages increased and continued. I am not anti-American, but I am a little careful about the present occupant of the presidency. Providing that he is not impeached, he will retain that post for another two years. However I think that he is impervious to the reactions of the middle east. That is illustrated by his bombing of Libya, which was endorsed and underwritten, I am sad to say, by the United Kingdom Government.

If the United States President was after those guilty of the La Belle nightclub bombing in Berlin, where many Americans died, evidence shows that he got the wrong country. If the object was military targets, a recent television film shows clearly how indiscriminate that targeting was. Women, children and other civilians paid with their lives for an American action endorsed and supported by the British Government.

That was an act of vengeance. It did not deal with terrorism. I can imagine the outcry in the House if we released F111s to deal with terrorists in Northern Ireland. The Americans' blunt instrument turned many Arabs away, not only from the United States but from the United Kingdom. It is sad that we are being dragged along to be regarded by many in the Arab community not as people to whom they can turn for justice but as potential enemies.

No country has suffered more in the middle east than the Lebanon. During the civil war about 10 per cent. of the people have become casualties, being seriously wounded or killed. There will be no solution to the Lebanon problem until all foreign troops, be they Syrian or Israeli, are removed from that country. Only then can we hope to achieve stability.

The greatest casualties in the Lebanon tragedy are the refugees in the Palestinian refugee camps of Bourj-al-Barajneh, Chatila and Rashideyeh. The camps have been under siege since last October or November. Medical teams report that the blockade causes a complete lack of food and medical supplies.

One camp houses 12,000 and another, 5,000. The estimated casualties in the camps amount to almost 5,000. So severe is malnutrition and starvation that medical teams say that many mothers cannot produce milk for their infant children. But there is no replacement for such milk. British people serve on those medical teams and the House will want to pay tribute to all those who work under such difficult and dangerous conditions to preserve life. The medical teams report that mothers and children are shot if they try to leave the camps to find food. In Chatila camp, for example, no anaesthetics or antibiotics are available.

Hospitals, like the camps, have been subject to intense artillery bombardment. In one camp it is estimated that there have been about 200 direct hits from artillery on the

hospital. The hospital at the Chatila camp has been reduced from four to two storeys. The camps are short not only of food and medical supplies but of clean water.

The crucial shortage in those camps is fuel: Without fuel they not only cannot cook, but they cannot work the pumps that raise clean water. In effect the people are literally drinking their own sewage. That is the position for thousands and thousands of people. To start with, they were refugees and were deprived of human dignity. Now they are existing—that is the only word to describe their lives—from day to day.

When we talk in the Chamber today about human rights we must think of the human rights of the men, women and children in those Palestinian refugee camps in the Lebanon. Hunger strikes there mean that members of the family give up eating to try to preserve the lives of others. They face escalating casualties and the fact that almost 95 per cent. of some of the camps have been destroyed.

I am aware that grants of money have been given to help the refugees, but what we need more than anything else is an international solution of the problem. There will be no peace in the middle east until a solution is fund to the Palestine question. That solution will not solve every problem in the middle east, but it will be a giant step forward. It is no good talking of maintaining human rights, removing terrorism, or peace in the middle east—escalating conflict in the middle east could be a major factor in an international war—unless the countries of the West, including Britain, realise that they must back the resolution of this problem. We can no longer be prepared for the United States, which is a prisoner of Israel, time after time to block a solution. We need a resolution of this key question. Without it we shall see no peace in our time in the middle east.

8.32 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Praise has rightly been heaped upon my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for her brillantly successful Soviet visit. I would like to add a word of warm praise for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, whose patient work over the years helped to prepare for the recent visit. Successes such as the Soviet visit by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister do not happen out of the blue. That visit was the result of an immense amount of work by my right hon. and learned Friend and we should recognise that. I should also like to pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend for the way in which he has opened our eyes to what is going on in eastern and central Europe in recent years. My right hon. and learned Friend has paid many visits to that area. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) mentioned those visits.

There is no doubt that the mood in eastern Europe has changed as those countries have begun to come out of the extraordinary time warp in which they existed and consumers have begun to raise their sights, look westwards and want more. It is questionable whether those countries can cross the Rubicon of political reform into a genuine capitalist system without bringing the Soviets straight down on their backs.

On a recent visit to Budapest my impression was that the country was full of people good at enterprise, who wish to develop an enterprise system, but who live in intense fear that if they move too quickly and go too far the iron heel will be down on them immediately. I heard the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) talk about empires, but there can be no more vivid example of living under the imperial yoke than the atmosphere that pervades a country such as Hungary. That country is looking increasingly to the West. It has a tradition of enterprise and capitalism, but it dare not move for fear of bringing the iron heel down upon it.

I should also like warmly to associate myself with the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Leed, East (Mr. Healey) concerning the late David Watt. He was a good friend of mine and it was a horrifying and miserable thing to hear of his death. Although I did not agree with him on every issue, nevertheless he was a stimulating, fair-minded person and it is a tragedy that he has gone.

Obviously, after the Soviet visit, the focus of the debate has been on east-west relations and a balance of forces in Europe and the Atlantic area. I suggest to my hon. Friends and hon. Members that it is as well to remember that the world's second richest and third most powerful nation—the third super power of the late 1980s—lies outside that area. I refer to Japan. It is the Japanese dimension to our affairs and our overseas policies on which I wish to dwell for a few moments. I do not believe that it is wholly unrelated to our narrower discussions of the world within Europe and the possibilities now open to us by Soviet disarmament proposals.

I was glad to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary say that, when it comes to relations with Japan, the aim is to increase market access. Apparently our policy is a liberalising intention and a commitment to free trade. If that is so, I am bound to say that the idea of threatening to revoke Japanese banking licences and pushing the Japanese institutions out of London seems a questionable way of achieving that aim. I have long argued that we should have a much more comprehensive approach to Anglo-Japanese relations. In that way we could deal with such crises as they occur rather than waiting until something goes disastrously wrong and then making threatening noises or proposing measures that may not do much more than damage the United Kingdom.

I appreciate that the present economic dispute with Japan is extremely irritating. Indeed, it is one of many irritating things—the Scotch whisky curb and the habit of placing absurd standards on imports. I appreciate why people are concerned about the saga of Cable and Wireless. But I urge my right hon. Friends to think extremely carefully about the idea of placing curbs on Japanese institutions and on the free entry of Japanese finance institutions to the City of London. I urge them to keep the question of financial institutions and our opportunities to get into Tokyo separate from the issue of the Cable and Wireless investment in the second telecommunications system in Japan. I believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends are aware that we have not heard the full story about Cable and Wireless—nothing like it. There are many ramifications that may not lend themselves to emotional utterances in the House, but they must be studied carefully before we go at half-cock on that issue.

As a nation we are committed to the open trading system and for that reason I was encouraged by my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks. We must remain committed. The suggestion that we are prepared to move away from that commitment when we are faced with minor squalls in economic matters represents a worrying

[Mr. David Howell]

route. The strands go deep, and we must be careful that what appears to be a temporary deviation does not become a habit. The main aim of world economic policy at the moment is to get countries such as Japan to spend much more and expand much faster. The policy is not to put up more barriers by retaliation or to move the world into a cycle of protectionism.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although the toleration that he is spelling out, with which I agree wholeheartedly, is admirable, none the less there must come a point when Japanese penetration of our markets becomes intolerable? At that stage we must act from strength to get the Japanese to open their markets to our imports. How does my right hon. Friend believe we can do that?

Mr. Howell: My hon. Friend anticipates me. I shall describe in a moment how we should proceed rather than how we should not proceed in this matter.

I have mentioned two reasons why short-term retaliatory threats are not the right way. The third and fundamental reason is that the idea of each country being in bilateral payments balance with another country is utterly absurd. It means nothing at all. It may happen that we have a large current deficit with Japan. We have an even larger current deficit with Germany. But in neither case is that a meaningful economic concept. The flow of trade is triangular or quadrilateral—or many-sided—in a variety of countries at different levels of processes and products. The proposition that we must work to obtain an equal balance of trade with each country and that something is wrong if we do not belongs to the world of fantasy. It is certainly not a guide to policy, or should not be.

Japanese exports have been falling recently and Japanese imports have been rising rapidly—15 per cent. in volume in the past two years. If a little patience is shown, because of the enormous appreciation in the yen, we shall see a major impact on the Japanese balance. That will take time. In the meantime, people want instant results and we have the sort of dramas that we had only a few days ago.

Another reason why the open threats that we have heard so far are not valuable is that they are incredible. They do not carry any weight. Everyone knows that if we were to prevent the movement of financial institutions into the City of London, or demand the removal of those already here, they would go elsewhere. If it is suggested that somehow they could be kept out of the EC, there are other countries in Europe that are not in the EC that would find it hard to say no to them. Switzerland is the obvious example.

If I may stick for a moment on the negative side, there is one more reason why it is a mistake to deal in terms of open retaliatory threats. My young son, who learns judo at school, or it may be karate—I am not very good on these things—tells me that the secret of wrestling with rivals in those styles and techniques is to let a rival's own weight work against him. That is extremely good advice in dealing with the colossally powerful Japanese economy.

The truth is that the weight of Japan today is its staggering prosperity; its enormous capacity to save and to generate investment. Its weakness is that it is not an effective part of the global security system. It has grown powerful and has lived by the belief — which is a complete anachronism in today's integrated defence and financial systems — that it is a small island that can safeguard its vulnerability as far as possible and lie low, and that as long as it does that it need not fulfil any responsibilities in the international global system. That is no longer true. It is no longer true of defence and it is no longer true, and it has not been so in Japan for some years, of energy and, in particular, oil. The question of Gulf and middle east stability is central to the survival and development of a peaceful Japanese society, and many Japanese recognise that.

Above all, we should be pressing Japan on its weak point—the failure of that giant so far to contribute to the global security system even remotely on the sort of scale commensurate with its enormous prosperity, size and importance in the world's economic system. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield made some points on that, although I cannot remember whether he gave a figure. Japan spends about $12 billion a year on so-called self-defence against the $24 billion or $25 billion a year that Britain spends, yet Japan has a GNP three times the size of ours. We should now be pressing the Japanese on precisely that point. If they are to expand and prevent the world economy going into recession, of which there is a great danger now, it may well be that on defence spending, among other things, there is room for expansion.

Dr. Kissinger told some of us the other day that that is all very dangerous. He said that we could not let the Japanese spend more on defence because that would lead again to the rise of militarism in Asia, of which we have seen horrific consequences in the past and of which we do not want any more. I think that he is looking too much at the past. We are talking not about the rise of national militarism, or its dangers, but about a gigantic nation—the world's second richest — contributing to the incredibly expensive global security system.

The reality is that the SS20s that are pointing at Europe and that we want taken out of the INF system are also deployed in Asia, for reasons that I have never quite understood. Certainly they do not harmonise closely with the idea of the Soviet Union as entirely benign. But the point is that if Japan wants the intermediate nuclear missiles to be removed, and if it wants to move into the post-INF order, it will have to consider playing a much bigger part in the global defence system that follows.

We have all heard enough in this debate to understand that the zero option is bound to mean in the short term, and I suspect in the long term as well, increased expenditure on conventional forces to make some match with Soviet Union superiority, although we have argued about how great that superiority is. It is also bound to mean, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has pointed out, a considerably enhanced importance for British and French nuclear weapons. It is also bound to mean, as we have already heard from leading German authorities, that they now have a growing interest in seeking some kind of French or Franco-British nuclear protection. Those things are already happening.

But it is not only western Europe which will be more vulnerable in the new post-INF situation if it comes about. Japan will be vulnerable too. If anyone has any doubts about that, he should read the speech that Mr. Gorbachev made in Vladivostok when he visited that part of the world the other day, when he said clearly that there would be

pressures, and that the Soviet Union would have interests in that end of its empire just as much as it has interests in eastern Europe.

Rather than trying to tackle Japan on specific pin-prick points—I am afraid that they are only pin pricks—we would do better to be pressing this gigantic nation, which will dominate the 1980s and 1990s, including our own interests, on defence expenditure, overseas investment and support for overseas and world development. We should also press that nation to be making a much larger contribution to science and technology internationally than it has done in the past.

The thought that I want to encapsulate in this short intervention is that we should certainly press the Japanese on opening their markets, as my right hon. and learned Friend says. That would be right. We have some reason in some areas to be irritated and I wish good luck to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He has gone into the lion's den to explain how unacceptable and irritating some of those restrictions are. But also let us press the huge nation of Japan to become a much bigger and more open spender in defence and other areas of overseas investment. Let us realise that open threats of retaliation are not the subtle, clever or effective way in which to achieve the aim of expanding the world economy and maintaining the open free trade system.

8.48 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Possibly the most important proposal to come out of the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union was that more British schoolchildren will be able to visit Soviet families in their homes. Therefore, unlike the Prime Minister, they will not take until their 61st year to realise that in the Soviet Union are real people with the same sort of aspirations as the rest of us in the world who want peace, who are striving for a decent standard of living and who hold out the hand of friendship to people throughout the world.

The Prime Minister, in her speech at the Kremlin dinner, mentioned the memories of the second world war. Speaking of Britain, she said that our great cities had been bombed night after night. My first memories of the Soviet Union go back to the days when, as a child, I spent a year and a half sleeping every night in an Anderson air-raid shelter at the back of the garden. I remember the eight consecutive nights in Liverpool when we faced the wrath of Hitler's Luftwaffe. We faced many other nights of bombing in that city, too. Liverpool was the second worst-bombed city in the country after London.

In May 1941 we faced the May blitz, but I also remember what happened after 22 June 1941. Then we came in for a quieter time, and things became easier. There were not so many air raids. Those of us who remember Liverpool in those days remember the words that were spoken during the second world war by a former Conservative Member of Parliament, Mr. Duff Cooper, who said that we should never forget the debt that the British people owed to the gallant Red Army. I shall never forget that debt and I shall never forget what we owe to the Russians. Many people, inside and outside the House, are alive because of the valour of the Soviet army during those years. That was borne out in a speech made by Winston Churchill at President Roosevelt's press conference in Washington DC on 25 May 1943. We do well to remind ourselves of those days and of what Churchill said.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke) *rose*——

Mr. Wareing: I shall not give way. Many hon. Members still want to speak and I do not want to take up more time.

Churchill said:

"The Russians have held the weight of 190 German divisions and 28 divisions of satellite axis nations. They have done what no one else could do—torn part of the guts out of the German war machine. They have been grand allies in the heroic fashion".

Yes, there are those in this country who will remember what we owed to the Red Army during the second world war.

I went on my first visit to the Soviet Union in 1967. I was not part of any delegation. My wife and I simply got in my car in Liverpool, drove to the Soviet Union via Viborg and visited Leningrad, Novgorod and Moscow. We met ordinary people in those places. That was 20 years ago, and I realised then that there is more to compare between our two countries than there is to contrast—certainly as regards ordinary people. The Prime Minister is just gleaning a little of that truth.

Let us examine what the Soviet Union has had to suffer. It has faced three invasions from the West in this century. During the revolution and civil war 14 nations invaded the Soviet Union. It was attacked by Germany during the first world war and invaded during the second world war—an invasion that saved many of our necks. European Russia was devastated in 1945, but the Russians built up their country for the second time this century. That calls in question the attitude of those Tories who belittle the economic system in the Soviet Union. I would not support every facet of the system there—of course I would not—but where, if not in the Soviet Union, has the real economic miracle taken place since 1945? If its system is so weak, what are the Tories afraid of? Why do they think that Mr. Gorbachev and the Soviet Government are just waiting for us to give up nuclear weapons so that they can launch an attack?

After all the euphoria of the Prime Minister's visit and the propaganda of the Tory press that was associated with it, one thing emerged: the real differences between the position of the Prime Minister and that of President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, who have said that they want denuclearisation and an end to nuclear weapons. The Prime Minister alone holds the view that we should support the continuance of nuclear weapons. Mr. Gorbachev does not agree that nuclear deterrence is the only way of averting war. What sane person would disagree with him?

I was fortunate in 1984—thanks largely to the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris)—to be introduced to the Soviet leader. I did not spend nine hours or 28 minutes with him, but I was fortunate enough to have 10 minutes. I was impressed by his attitude to nuclear weapons, and I remember him telling me that the Soviet Union would never turn its weapons against those countries that did not have nuclear weapons on their soil.

The Prime Minister, however, still argues that a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous for us all. If she is right, why should not every country have its own nuclear arsenal? Let us all have nuclear arms. Does anyone seriously believe that the world

[Mr. Wareing]

would be a safer place, and that there would not be an even greater risk of an accidental outbreak of nuclear conflict? Mr. Gorbachev has offered to negotiate not only on the issue of nuclear arms but on conventional reductions, too.

What concessions do we offer? The Foreign Secretary has spoken of constraints on shorter-range weapons, yet at this very time the United States army, supported by the United Kingdom, has deployed the W79 8-inch artillery shell in West Germany. That is a weapon with a potential neutron capability, a fact that was hidden from this House for a number of years after the Montebello proposals.

The Prime Minister has talked of keeping the peace by the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan. I and my hon. Friends believe that it is highly desirable that the Afghanistan people should be allowed rightful self-determination, but freedom to choose one's own Government should not end in Afghanistan. That right —the Prime Minister often speaks of freedom of choice —must include the right of the peoples of Nicaragua, Vietnam and Angola to throw off their oppressors and seek economic solutions that are different from the ones that we would choose— solutions that are not to the liking of international finance capitalism.

The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) spoke of Communism in one breath and the dangers of subversion in the next. The only subversion that we have heard about that has threatened the British Government has come in the form of the allegations in Peter Wright's book. It is alleged that the Government of Harold Wilson were in danger of being subverted by the agents of the CIA and of others who wanted to ensure that democracy produced the right results in the eyes of American capitalism. The Harold Wilson Government were not in danger of being subverted by the agents of Moscow.

The Prime Minister has said that the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan will have a crucial part to play in the future of Afghanistan and in deciding how others see the Soviet Union, whether they trust it or fear it. The same must be true of the Americans, who have occupied Grenada and who currently occupy the Guantanamo base in Cuba without the approval of the Cuban Government. Equally, the same must be true of the United States Government continually giving support to the Contra terrorists in Nicaragua, to the UNITA South African-backed forces in Angola and to other regressive forces elsewhere in the world.

The Prime Minister has the audacity to go to the Soviet Union to talk about human rights. The Soviet General Secretary made one or two comments about that, and I believe that they are well worth repeating. At the Kremlin dinner, Mr. Gorbachev said that he hoped that his word would be heard openly and loudly in the West by the millions who are unemployed, the homeless, the destitute, by those beaten by the police and victimised in court— like the Liverpool city councillors—and by those whose civil rights and dignities are subjected to glaring discrimination because of the colour of their skin.

The Prime Minister has been a Member of this place since 1959 and we look in vain for any early-day motion which she has signed opposing oppressions by the Pinochet regime in Chile or by the dictatorships of Salazar and Caetano in Portugal. The right hon. Lady was a Member of this place when those two were in control of affairs in Portugal, and the same applies to the colonels' regime in Greece. We can look in vain for the name of the Prime Minister being signed in opposition to oppression and violation of human rights in any of the countries to which I have referred.

To send the Prime Minister to Moscow to preach human rights is like sending a burglar to inaugurate a home-watch scheme. When she visited the Soviet Union the Soviet Government were generous enough to allow her to see the dissidents Mr. Sakharov, Mrs. Bonner and Mr. Begun. I hope that Mr. Gorbachev will take up the Prime Minister's invitation to revisit Britain. When he does so, I hope that he will be allowed to see our unemployed, homeless and old people who have had their heating allowances reduced and are endangered by the threat of hypothermia every winter. I hope that he will visit Liverpool and Tyneside to see our dissidents. I hope also that one day we shall have a Prime Minister who feels as popular and as safe in Liverpool and on Tyneside as the present Prime Minister felt last week in Moscow and Tbilisi.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal for short speeches because I understand that those who occupy the Front Benches may seek to reply at 9.20 pm.

9.4 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) drew attention to the fact that we owe a great deal to the Soviet army because of its sacrifice during the second world war. The hon. Gentleman spoke about bombing, and the Chamber was bombed six weeks before the Soviet Union was attacked. We should not forget that Britain was involved in fighting against the Third Reich for some years before the Soviet Union was attacked.

Recently I had hoped to visit Moscow to be one of three Members of Parliament to be present at the British embassy to present awards to a certain group of refuseniks, including Mr. Josif Begun. I was glad that, instead of the three of us going, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was able to present the award herself. I feel that she was entitled to raise the issue of human rights. The Russian Government accepted the commitments in the Helsinki final accord relating to the free movement of people and ideas, and my right hon. Friend was entitled to request that the commitments be observed.

That issue has a relationship with arms control, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated in the House that the way in which the Soviet Union honours the Helsinki accord is an indicator of the way in which it would honour any other agreement. How it acts in respect of its own communities is evidence of its good intentions.

There is no doubt that those directly concerned wish the issue of human rights to be raised. Mr. and Mrs. Begun were quoted by the Prime Minister as saying:

"There is a great deal to be done. Will the West please continue to make representations?" — [*Official Report*, 2 April 1987; Vol. 113, c. 1230.]

Apparently they believe that the changes that have taken place would not have happened in the absence of pressure from outside.

Mr. Gorbachev has said that he would look at humanitarian cases carefully and that wherever possible there would be positive results. I would like to raise the

case of one family which is known to me. In June 1975 Mrs. Cherna Goldort applied to the department of emigration in Novosibirsk in order to emigrate to Israel with her daughter Galina. She worked for a research institute for chemical technology and she signed an undertaking not to leave the Soviet Union for a period of five years after she had finished her work there. That period ended in 1976 but she was still refused an exit visa.

In 1979 Mrs. Cherna Goldort was summoned to an interview with General Slontezky, an official in the emigration department. The general said:

"You have one daughter in Israel and another with you. If you want to be with both of them, then let Galina go, and it will be easier for you to receive permission for yourself."

Therefore, Galina was allowed to leave and she settled in Israel. Mrs. Cherna Goldort applied for an exit visa as General Slontezky had suggested but she was refused.

In October 1980 her two daughters in Israel appealed to the Madrid review of the Helsinki accords. They were informed that the official reason for refusal was the fact that Mrs. Goldort's two brothers remained in the Soviet Union. When her brothers went to meet the relevant officials to say that they did not wish to stand in the way of their sister emigrating, they were removed from the building by force.

Since that time Mrs. Cherna Goldort has had a heart operation and is not in good health. She has been refused an exit visa until at least 1995. Her letter states:

"I am here . . . You are there and there is no end in sight."

I raise this case because I met her daughter Galina in the House of Commons with Martin Gilbert who is Sir Winston Churchill's official biographer. I promised to raise the matter with the British ambassador in Moscow.

The point is one of principle. Divided families should, wherever possible, be reunited on humanitarian grounds and in future there should be a higher regard for the Helsinki accords in the Soviet Union. We must appreciate, as was said earlier, how much has been done already and how much Mr. Gorbachev is trying to do. However, we should not underestimate the extent of the opposition to him within the KGB.

I am glad that the Prime Minister had the courage to raise these issues. It is particularly significant that she went on television, possibly before a much larger audience than any other Western leader. The commercial contracts worth £400 million and the various other agreements she has signed along with the Foreign Secretary are extremely important, including the new arrangements for an improved hot line between No. 10 and the Kremlin. It seems that those are remarkable achievements and full advantage should be taken of them. The Prime Minister's visit will act as a catalyst, not only in reducing tension but in making it easier to achieve future advantages in arms control and in human rights negotiations. In doing that, I believe that she has rendered a service to the Western democracies.

9.8 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Prime Minister's pre-election visit to the Soviet Union was far more concerned with television audiences in Britain than in the Soviet Union. It was clearly a pre-election public relations exercise, and there is no doubt that that is the view of most people in politics and the media. I am sure that that view is expressed in one way or another in the country as a whole. However, that is not to minimise in any way the changes that are occurring in the Soviet Union, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) said. Those changes are of considerable importance. There is undoubtedly a welcome change of atmosphere and a climate where criticism is being permitted on a number of topics. It is especially expressed in films, plays and some books. The press is beginning to play a somewhat different role in the Soviet Union than it has played until recently.

The other evening I watched on "Newsnight" excerpts from a Soviet film that is playing to crowded audiences in the Soviet Union. The film is called "Repentance". The main character—he is certainly no hero in the film—is based largely on Beria, Stalin's criminal chief of the secret police, who had many other responsibilities. He did not survive Stalin for long. Clearly, the audience were happy to be able to watch a film that, to some extent at least, dealt frankly with a topic that, until now, could not be mentioned.

At long last, "Dr. Zhivago" is to be published, and that is a welcome change. I well remember, in 1958, the uproar in the Soviet Union when that book was published in the West. Other publications and articles are appearing, and plays and films dealing with what, until now, have been sensitive and controversial themes are being shown. That is all to the good.

I look forward to the time when Soviet citizens can leave and enter their country as we can leave and enter ours, and I believe that Soviet people should be able to enjoy that right. Moreover, this is the opportunity for the West to respond to the new atmosphere, and certainly to the repeated offers by the Soviet leadership to negotiate meaningfully on a wide range of subjects such as nuclear disarmament and arms control.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I believe that most people in Britain feel that the United States has more responsibility for the failure to negotiate properly than has the Soviet Union. There is a widespread feeling here—one that I share—that there is no wish or enthusiasm on the part of the American Administration, and certainly not on the part of President Reagan, to respond constructively to what is happening in Moscow. There is too much enthusiasm for the status quo on nuclear weapons, for star wars and the rest.

Whatever view the British people take about unilateral nuclear disarmament, there is no passion for nuclear weapons as such. However, the Prime Minister seems to have that passion. Her constant theme is that for the past 40 years peace has been kept because of them, and it will be maintained in the future only because of such weapons. There are two logical conclusions from that. The first is that there should be no reduction in nuclear weapons. According to her, that would be a danger to the continuation of peace. Secondly, as my hon. Friends have pointed out, why not spread this more widely? And instead of trying to limit the production of nuclear weapons by various countries, why not say that the more that have nuclear weapons in Europe, Africa and Asia, the more peace there will be? Is that not after all the logic of the Prime Minister's argument?

Our concern on the Labour Benches for human and democratic rights is universal. It is not confined by any means to the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. Of course the people in those countries do not enjoy anything like the civil liberties that we have. As I have often said, in the Labour movement, in the House, and elsewhere, if we have

[Mr. David Winnick]

these democratic rights, there is no reason why the people of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Hungary should not have them. That makes sense. However, there are double standards and they are not on this side of the House.

In 1973, when the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) was a junior Minister in the Foreign Office, he spoke about what had happened in Chile as a result of the armed coup. I gave the right hon. Gentleman notice that I would mention this. The Pope has just visited Chile and he went to the national stadium, where, as we know, following the coup thousands of people were held, and many were executed. The bodies were piled high. On 28 November, the right hon. Member for Pavilion said:

"It is not possible for the Government of the United Kingdom to intervene everywhere all over the world. We do our best to protect human rights in the Council of Europe and through the United Nations, but it would be unrealistic to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries as suggested in the motion and it would also very often be, in our experience, counter-productive". — [*Official Report*, 28 November 1973; Vol. 865, c. 483.]

This illustrates that, when it comes to Chile, there is no great concern on the Tory side about human rights.

As I asked during an intervention, did the Prime Minister, in the week before she went to Moscow, lecture the King of Saudi Arabia when he came over here? Did she talk about human rights in that country? Could it be argued that the Prime Minister has been a champion defender of the rights of the black majority in South Africa? Is it not more accurate to say that, time and again, the Prime Minister has used every argument to stop effective British and international action being taken to undermine that notorious and evil regime in South Africa, which denies human rights to millions of people simply because of the colour of their skin?

Before lack of time compels me to finish, let me deal with another matter relating to Eastern Europe—that is Czechoslovakia. I note that Mr. Gorbachev is visiting that country this week. Like many others, I am very disturbed that two members of the Czechoslavakian Jazz Section were recently put in prison. Undoubtedly, there is a good deal of repression in Czechoslovakia—far more than there is at present in the Soviet Union—and we hope that that will change.

I should also like briefly to mention the Palestinians in the refugee camps in the Lebanon. I welcome the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young), who made a passionate plea about those Palestinians. He is right; I cannot deny it. But, if I am interested in human rights in various parts of the world, should I not also be concerned about the human rights of the Palestinians?

I have no time now to deal with what has been happening in the camps, and to a large extent my hon. Friend has already dealt with it. However, I have always taken the view—and I make no apology for it—that Israel has as much right to existence as any other country. That remains my view, whether it is that of the majority or of the minority at any given time. It does not mean that I am not a very harsh critic of that country's policies. It does not mean either that I believe that the West Bank should be in Israel. But I do believe that there will be no lasting security in the middle east, or for Israel itself, until the solution is found for a Palestinian state. If the people of Israel have a right to their country, the Palestinian people have no less a right to a state. It is absolutely essential that effective action is taken internationally to try to secure a settlement, and the Soviet Union and the United States certainly have a role to play in that.

9.17 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for accelerating his comments. As you reminded us three minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, before the Front Bench takes over, the best prepared of all speeches must be cast aside.

If I had had longer, I would have wished to turn from five hours dominated by a debate on East-West relations — and the related feature of human rights and disarmament — to discuss a forgotten element in our foreign affairs debates of the past four months. I refer—after what the hon. Gentleman has just said—to South Africa.

There is, as I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will note, a lull in the debates and deliberations in this place on the affairs and fortunes of South Africa. It gives us time to reassess, to revalue and to take fresh stock. In that lull, let us recall that the objective is to see established in South Africa a form of Government that is acceptable to all races. The present Government have tried faithfully to pursue that objective.

During this time for reassessment, let us consider whether we should not make a more positive assessment of the role to be played in South Africa by the tribal leaders. In recent days, we have heard announcements and pronouncements about the possible establishment of an indabha in Kwazulu-Natal. We have also seen further advances towards genuine independence in Bophuthatswana. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will take on board the sincere plea that, in pursuing the encouragement of those who seek moderation and a peaceful solution acceptable to all races, he will listen to those voices of moderation from both black and white. Many Conservative Members wish to place on record their personal esteem for the move made by Denis Worrall in his courageous stand for Parliament in the approaching white minority general election.

With one minute to go, let me sum up my argument by saying that voices of moderation are at work in South Africa. Let the Government hear those voices, identify them, encourage them and reassess the low value that hitherto has been accorded to the leaders of tribal groupings in South Africa.

9.19 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The debate has ranged across such a large number of issues that it will be impossible for the Minister and me to cover all of them this evening. However, all hon. Members will agree that it has been a fascinating debate. It has rightly concentrated on the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union and all that it means to us. We look forward to hearing the Minister's predictions in his summing up, because he and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) have seen their weekend predictions crumble into dust. The Minister is here to face the music this evening, but the right hon. Member for Devonport has probably not yet caught up with the fact that the election will not take place next

month. He, together with all his hon. Friends, is probably campaigning now in another part of the country or, who knows, in another part of the world.

Right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow. We welcome the fact that the trip was a success. It is not a grudging welcome; it is not forced. We are genuinely happy that the Prime Minister returned with such refreshing views of Mr. Gorbachev and of what he is doing and also with such enlightened sentiments about the future.

Hon. Members have pointed out that there are few tangible results from the days of walkabout, intimate chat and electorally appealing photography, but we do not deny the value of establishing trust with the general secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union. Hon. Members have also pointed out that the climate for an agreement on intermediate nuclear forces was not helped before the visit by the Prime Minister having needlessly invented fresh conditions or linkages—from human rights to coincidental short range nuclear agreements. Hon. Members have pointed out, too, the glaringly obvious fact that negotiations on arms control, as distinct from after dinner speeches about the subject, are the property of Mr. Shultz next week. That does not detract for a moment from our genuine relief that the Prime Minister has now abandoned the empty rhetoric of the cold war and embraced the idea of dialogue and the establishment of trust with the Soviet Union.

When BBC4 listeners turned on their radios last Wednesday morning, 1 April, and heard the breathless tones of the Prime Minister when she said,

"If he gave me his word, I would believe him",

many of them must have had good reason to feel that this was one of the broadcasters' jokes that had been specially created for that particular morning, but when they had woken up to the fact that it was genuine there was undoubtedly a collective sigh of relief that this would be a safer world than the world that we normally associate with the analyses of our national leader.

Now that the Prime Minister has caught up with the enlightened views of Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand, whom she tried to put off before she visited Moscow, perhaps she will now wend her way to Tokyo and use her now famous charm on Prime Minister Nakasone on a subject that has also exercised hon. Members in this debate.

Where, however, does this new re-think leave the Government's vision of Europe? The confusion of the signals from all sources must be a sign of ministerial nervousness about the election that looms over them and threatens them.

The Foreign Secretary made a speech in Brussels a couple of weeks ago which represented a complete volte face by the Government on the subject of Western European union. That speech, combined with his reported veto at the weekend on the European Community's strengthening its links with the United States, certainly suggests that the Foreign Secretary is still performing his act of getting into the Prime Minister's consciousness by making radical speeches rather than through the ignored Foreign Office memoranda which land on or are discarded from her desk.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That suggests to me that the hon. Gentleman is giving far too much credence to what he reads in the newspapers. On the second point that he made, he should not believe for one moment that I am seeking to stand in the way of effective co-operation across the Atlantic. We are all seeking to discover the best way of advancing it. On the first point, he just happened to have read the most recent speech. If he read the points which I made on many previous occasions, he would find no difference in the points of view. I acknowledge the incompleteness of his information.

Mr. Robertson: The Foreign Secretary may seek to clarify the record, but I do not think that he persuades very many people. It would perhaps help the House if major meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the European Community took place at the weekend. Perhaps then we could have a precise record of what happens at those meetings and a report from the Foreign Secretary or a junior Minister to the House of Commons to let us know precisely what takes place. I do not like relying on newspaper reports any more than the Foreign Secretary does, but sometimes the House of Commons has no alternative because it gets no more information from him.

Just as we welcome the Prime Minister's conversion, so too do we welcome the Foreign Secretary's conversion to the creation of robust Western European self-reliance, because we see the merit of Europe's starting to prepare for possible reductions in the physical United States presence on our continent.

It has to be said that the fashionable obsession which we hear about very often from the other side of the Atlantic via the airways with alleged American isolationism or the Americans' rejection of a role in Europe is knocked on the head by the splendid study of American opinion which was made by the authoritative and very distinguished Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. When its sample was asked about leaving troops in Europe, no less than 82 per cent. said that they should be left in Europe and only 16 per cent. said that they should be withdrawn. So the scaremongers who question the Atlantic relationship would be well advised to absorb this study.

If the Foreign Secretary is to fly such radical kites, we have the right to ask whether the Prime Minister flies them with him. While we more than welcome the objective of European equality with our American ally — and equality is what we seek with the Americans—there is no sign that the Prime Minister has abandoned her affection for the subservient, lap-dog approach which has characterised her premiership. We seek in vain signs that she has changed — but maybe the Foreign Secretary continues to work on her.

If evidence of the poverty of the right hon. Lady's strategy on Atlantic relationships is needed, it can be found in the news today from Westland, only a year after the forced marriage with the American partner took place and resulted in large numbers of redundancies. That is the partnership that brought so much chaos to the Government and that we were told at the time would protect jobs and protect Westland. We know precisely what value to place on the Government's record and their view of the way in which that relationship should develop.

The Foreign Secretary rightly mentioned the European Community but dealt inadequately with it. Two weeks ago we marked the 30th anniversary of the signing of the treaty of Rome. The celebrations in the United Kingdom were

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appropriately muted as if to recognise that the 30-year-old European Community had little to celebrate other than the fact that it had survived at all until 1987.

The Community is beset with crises. The budget is still in financial chaos, with elastoplast ineffectively keeping all the cracks covered and with inventiveness confined to more and more desperate creative accountancy. Indeed, the week before last the Court of Auditors described the recent attempt at a budget as illegal. The common agricultural policy is still an uncontrolled shambles. The drive by Lord Cockfield to a barrierless Common Market by 1992 is already doomed because he fails to see that such a concept is impossible without the necessary and coincidental balances against the market dictating that all the benefits go to the strongest areas and member states.

Nothing betrays this Government's cynical betrayal of the European interest more than the fiasco of the European research programme. At the same time as the Foreign Secretary is preaching the virtue of European self-reliance our so-called technology Minister, the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie), the Minister of State at the Department of Industry, is in there openly sabotaging the one programme which might make Europe competitive with those in the United States and in the far east who threaten us.

Britain stands alone — the only nation in Europe blocking the £4·5 million European framework research programme. We were abandoned by our last reluctant ally — West Germany — at the end of last week. We are attacked by everybody else in the Community. We are even isolated from the entire sycophantic group of Conservatives in the European Parliament. The Government project their image of King Canute on the beaches of high technology.

The Government embarrass the nation and disgrace our reputation with their inexplicable opposition to the most valuable and relevant of European programmes. That is true even if it did not contrast so starkly with the pusillanimous attitude to the out of control farm spending and food stockpiling. The Government add their words of opposition to that scandal, but their ineffectiveness is manifest.

But glorious opposition to a realistic research effort is the real fighting ground for the neanderthals in Downing street and the Treasury. When it comes to destroying the European capacity to recover in high technology, it is small wonder that even the Conservative research spokesman in the European Parliament, Mr. Amedee Turner, said that the Pattie position was "becoming untenable"—delicately put. The CBI disagrees with the Government, the other 11 countries of the Community disagree with them, the 63 Tory Members of the European Parliament disagree with them. Their case is isolated and discredited. We get more from European Community research programmes than we pay in, but the stubborn, irrational resistance goes on. We are made a laughing stock and branded as short-sighted by the rest of the Community.

Our cynicism is not alone in European Community politics. The West Germans, refreshed by a general election when the Christian Democrats won another majority, are now entering the cynicism game to equal our Government. Last Thursday in Bad Godesburg, West Germany, I listened to a speech by the opposite number of the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker),. Dr. Inngard Adam-Schwaetzer, the Minister of State in the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic, who said:

> "There is no alternative to the continuing integration of the member states of the European community. This sometimes requires that we put our national interests behind us."

When next day I looked in the British newspapers for this declaration of faith in the European Community, what headlines did I see:

> "West Germans warn EEC that their own interests come first".

It was a betrayal of the ideal by those who preached that European unity is what matters and that national interest must be pulled behind us. The prospects for a resolution of the major financial crisis in the European Community have diminished with each act of cynical self-interest. *[Interruption.]* I ignore the sedentary interruptions from Government Members whose heckling reaches new heights. Election fever is now overcoming even the Foreign Secretary, who is carried away by that prospect.

The middle east is of common concern to us all. There must be widespread relief in this House that the disgraceful siege of the Palestinian camps in Beirut may have begun to end. This serious issue has been raised by the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young).

The slow starvation of the tragic inhabitants of the camps at Chatila and Bourj-al-Barajneh has been a real horror that has been given wholly insufficient attention by the world community. One can only compare the attention and concern that we paid to the slow, calculated and cynical attempted destruction of these people with all the attention that was given to the attack on them by the Christian militia. When Jews help Christians to destroy Arabs it is an outrage to humanity, but when Arabs starve Arabs it is viewed simply with concern and resignation. The sieges are not over yet. Maximum pressure must be put on all parties to get them stopped immediately.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, South-East is right to remind the House of the British citizens who still languish kidnapped in the back streets of Beirut. Our friend Terry Waite is the best known but certainly not the only one whose fate still remains unknown but for whom we still keep our hopes high.

We welcome the Foreign Secretary's report that the European Community has now launched a new initiative by convening an international conference on the middle east. With the Americans apparently opting out of the process, and with new responsibilities lying all the more heavily and onerously on the shoulders of the European Community, it is vital that the momentum be maintained even if the outcome is far from clear.

There are some welcome signs in the middle east. The Americans do not seem to be so opposed to an international conference. Mr. Shimon Peres is continuing the effort of persuading his Prime Minister of the merits of some dialogue in this area. The Soviet Union is making historic, if tentative, moves towards recognising Israel. King Hussein is also making valiant efforts to deal with both the Palestinian case and the Syrians. The key to progress in the middle east lies in Syria. If King Hussein's visit to Damascus last Friday is productive, then a glimmer of hope may exist.

But if Mr. Tindemans' perambulations round the middle east bring back one message, it must be that

nothing will happen in the troubles of the middle east, the Lebanon or the West Bank without the involvement of Syria. What happens then? What do the British Government do at that point? Is there not a case for reviewing—in the light of developments since we broke off diplomatic relations—our relationship with Syria? Surely it is better to do that than to find ourselves, as so often before, out-manoeuvred by our Community partners and forced to change against our will.

Many other subjects of central importance to this country and its future were raised in this debate, including the whole question of central America and the trade war with Japan that we seem to be on the brink of. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who is not in his place, remarkably chose to deal with that in his speech.

Finally, I wish to comment on a subject mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North, human rights in eastern Europe. We have heard much about human rights in the past few days and, as my hon. Friends have said, we have strong views about such issues. We do not have the same partisan view about human rights that is so often displayed by individuals on Opposition Benches. However, I entirely endorse the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North about the Czech repression of the Jazz Section of the Czech musicians' union. Suppressing ordinary musicians as though they were commercial criminals persuades no one outside Czechoslovakia that their actions are right. I returned an invitation to attend a conference in Czechoslovakia, declining on the ground that I could not accept an invitation to a country which acted in that way towards people who were simply practising their music.

The Prime Minister's visit to Moscow may yet turn out to be a watershed representing the point when at last she saw that there was a common destiny for the world and that the idea of frozen hostile camps at each other's throats could have no sense in a world with split-second timed weapons of mass destruction. If that is the case, we will welcome the dawning of the blindingly obvious and the world will perhaps be slightly safer as a result.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I certainly agree with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) that this is a very hard debate to summarise, especially in the 19 minutes now left to me. In the course of the debate we have been taken down some extremely interesting avenues. For example, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) referred to the possible reunification of Germany and my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Sir C. Mather) mused on what might have happened if we had stayed in Palestine and if we still exercised strict influence over the Persian gulf. Unfortunately, I do not have time to pursue those interesting thoughts. I must come straight to the detailed points raised in the debate.

First, I must state how very much I agree with all hon. Members, and most recently my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who referred to the enormous success of the recent visit of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to Moscow. It most certainly was an enormous success and I thank the hon. Member for Hamilton for adding his tribute.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and other Opposition Members could not be as generous. When those Opposition Members referred to my right hon. Friend's visit in the disparaging terms that they used, the words "sour grapes" came to mind. They simply cannot stand the thought that a Conservative Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were so well received and so attentively listened to in Moscow.

The question of human rights has been much referred to in the debate and quite rightly. We shall try to look into the human rights case specifically mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West. I can tell the hon. Member for Hamilton that I met members of the Jazz Section and members of Charter 77 when I was in Prague a few weeks ago. The Czech Government already know what we think about the trial of the members of the Jazz Section and we shall puruse that matter.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Renton: No. I have many points to answer.

We heard a great deal about human rights. However, there is a strange and curious affliction that appears to strike down Opposition Members. That is the compulsion to shout "Chile" or "South Africa" whenever the subject of human rights abuses in the Soviet Union is raised. I must make the point that it is a peculiar idea that somehow human rights abuses in one country cancel out those in another. This Government take up human rights abuses wherever they occur—in the Lebanon, in Chile, in South Africa or in the Soviet Union. A particular point about human rights abuses in the Soviet Union is that the Helsinki accord imposed upon signatories precise obligations. Therefore, there is a duty and an obligation to focus on and highlight abuses of human rights in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. Moreover, for years these abuses have been systematic and institutionalised.

During the debate a number of Opposition Members, notably the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and the hon. Members for Walsall, North and for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), talked about the Prime Minister's love of nuclear weapons. Nuclearphilia was the word used by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East. It is sad but not surprising that Opposition Members follow this propaganda line. The Soviet Union has 50 times more nuclear missiles than us.

Mr. Winnick: The Prime Minister does love nuclear weapons.

Mr. Renton: It is foolish for the hon. Gentleman to say that the Prime Minister loves them. NATO cruise and Pershing deployments were a response to Soviet INF deployments, which now total over 900 warheads. Even under Mr. Gorbachev, new Soviet nuclear systems have been deployed in Europe. In a wise and measured speech my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) said that the gap in defence capability continues to widen in favour of the Soviets. As that is true, the talk of a nuclear-free world is nothing but that—just talk, aspiration and dreams.

We cannot disinvent nuclear weapons. They will continue to be deployed for many years, and as long as there is a civil nuclear industry, and that is growing all the time, nuclear material will be created. As long as nuclear weapons are there and as long as they represent a threat to our security, it would be irresponsible madness for this country unilaterally to surrender its own deterrent.

The Opposition often think that by cancelling Trident and spending more money on conventional weapons they

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would achieve such a balance that they would be able to do without nuclear weapons. However, Trident's share of the defence budget will, on average, be no more than 3 per cent. In the peak years of the procurement process its share will be less than 6 per cent. Planned future expenditure takes full account of the Trident programme in the same way as it takes account of any other major project. Indeed, the Tornado programme has been much more expensive than Trident will be.

Further, it is known that the Warsaw pact countries have a superiority over NATO of about 30,000 tanks in the central region of Europe. If Trident were cancelled and all that money was spent on other equipment, over a 20-year period all the Trident resources would buy just slightly more than one armoured division with 300 tanks. That includes the infrastructure, support and running costs. The Opposition should think about those figures. What is the purpose of just 300 more tanks in one armoured division when the Warsaw pact countries have 30,000 more than us in the central region of Europe?

I shall now turn from arms control to some of the many other matters raised in the debate. The hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) asked about the death threat against Dr. Pauline Cutting. As the hon. Gentleman will understand, we very much condemn the reported threats. I pay tribute to the courage of Dr. Cutting who carries out vital humanitarian work in difficult and dangerous conditions. There is little that the Government can do at present, but we are certainly ready to help with arrangements for Dr. Cutting to leave when conditions permit. We call on all concerned to end the violence and to allow free access to the camps for food and medicines.

A number of hon. Members including the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Dundee, West raised the question of the Lebanon. I fully agree with them that the press reports about the situation in the camps are deeply disturbing. The current situation is very confused. There are conflicting reports about whether the ceasefire is holding or has been breached and we do not know about the extent to which food will continue to get into the camps.

In his opening remarks my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred to the further aid that we have recently given to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The scope for United Kingdom action is limited, but we shall consider what we can do.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I should like to continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) raised the question of the international conference. We support the principle of an international conference and we are co-operating in setting it up with the United Nations Secretary-General. We are not over-optimistic. It is right that the modalities should be worked out in advance to ensure that the conference, if it takes place, is a success. We accept that at the moment the international conference seems to be the only way of taking the peace process forward, and therefore we are playing our part in the relevant discussions.

The hon. Member for Hamilton referred to the fact that the Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr. Tindemans, who is now President of the Foreign Affairs Council, is shortly going to Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Peres, is going to Madrid, Rome and Belgium. That shows that there is a certain momentum in the peace process, and we hope that it will be successful.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury asked about the Soviet Union. We have agreed with the Soviets on the urgency of getting the peace process moving. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State found that Mr. Shevardnadze's ideas on an international conference were not far from his own. In so far as we see a place for all five members of the Security Council in the international conference, there is acceptance that the Soviet Union will have to be involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher raised the question of Count Tolstoi's books and the massacres of displaced persons. He spoke movingly on that issue. I understand his deep concern. It has been the subject of much discussion over the years. The best contribution that the Government can make is to facilitate access to official records, which we do under the 30-year rule. The official records relating to post-war policy on repatriation have been open to scrutiny for more than a decade. It is not the business of the Government to reach a verdict on such issues, but I understand the strong feelings which lay behind my hon. Friend's remark, in which he utterly rejected the thesis that the late Lord Stockton was involved in a devious plot.

I was asked about Greece and Turkey. We welcome the restraint that has been shown by both sides. Confrontation is clearly in no one's interests and we are glad that Greece and Turkey are talking directly with each other. It is not for us to take sides in that dispute. It is best solved by direct negotiations, but we welcome Lord Carrington's offer of good offices.

I return to the opening remarks of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, even though he is not in the Chamber. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East said that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East had trivialised foreign affairs. That was a kindness. I have only one word for his speech — dreadful. As a reward for publicly abandoning his beliefs and supporting policies that he knows are nonsense the right hon. Member has been promoted to the post of the Labour party court jester, doing comic turns and trying in vain to amuse his dispirited Back Benchers. Every comic wants to play Hamlet, but it is sad to see a formerly serious actor volunteering to play the clown.

Mr. Winnick: The Minister is the clown.

Mr. Renton: As the days pass, his ability to fantasise increases. For example, on 25 March he made the astonishing claim on the "Today" programme that the zero-option was a Labour party proposal made in a Healey-Foot visit to Moscow in September 1981 and adopted later by President Reagan.

Nice try. We never learnt what Mr. Brezhnev said in reply. Unfortunately, the zero-option was discussed in NATO for months before President Reagan announced it in November 1981. It was even debated in the Bundestag in May 1981. Moreover, whatever his views in 1981, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East had clearly abandoned the zero-option by 1983 because on 31 October he commended to the House Mr. Andropov's offer to cut

SS20s in Europe to 140. He said that it was made not to negotiate on this offer because it would give the West a very good deal.

It is sometimes said that the alliance has no policies. I do not think that that is fair. The alliance has yards of policies — at last two for every subject. However, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has been the only member of the Liberal party present and no SDP member has attended at all.

It is convenient to have variations on policy to deploy depending upon the audience, but it leads to confusion, certainly within the alliance. I well remember the statement in the House during our last foreign affairs debate on 9 March by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) who said that, fortunately, he was not responsible for Liberal policies. I can sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's wish to dissociate himself from the alliance's loony Left but if the alliance spokesman for defence is not responsible for alliance defence policies, who is?

Mr. Gorbachev's treatment of the Prime Minister confirmed her status as a senior Western leader. Britain's standing in the world has seldom been higher. Given our long list of foreign policy successes, that is not surprising. We have achieved agreement with China on Hong Kong, guaranteeing a stable and secure future for the Hong Kong people. Within the European Community, contrary to the artificial indignation of the hon. Member for Hamilton, we have negotiated a favourable settlement on the long-standing budget dispute. We have played a key role in improving Community decision-making and in speeding up the creation of a single market in which goods, peoples and services can circulate freely.

The Gibraltar border has been reopened and negotiations have been started with Spain on the differences over Gibraltar. We played a leading role in the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe, which was successfully concluded last autumn. In Geneva last summer I was proud to table our proposals on challenge inspection, the ultimate test of verification for chemical weapons. Those proposals are now being carefully considered.

We have maintained a substantial aid programme totalling nearly £4 billion since 1983. We have responded quickly and generously to appeals for emergency aid in Africa. Meanwhile, we are giving bilateral aid to 120 countries.

Most important, we have maintained Britain's firm commitment to national defence and to the NATO Alliance, while promoting closer European defence co-operation, not least, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion suggested, through a revived Western European Union. We have worked steadily for a more stable relationship between East and West and for balanced and verifiable reductions in nuclear and conventional weapons.

Those achievements have come as a result of determination, persistence, consistency and reliability. I note with great pleasure the credit given for those achievements to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary by my right hon. Friends the Members for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and for Guildford (Mr. Howell). It is no wonder that other European leaders said that the Prime Minister spoke for Europe when she visited Moscow. Other Governments know where we stand and what we stand for. I contrast that with Labour party policy. All parties in Opposition face the problem of achieving consistency in foreign policy because they often have to react to issues as they come along. But the Labour party has achieved that because its members have all rallied under the disreputable banner of anti-Americanism.

If the Leader of the Opposition can say that there is an almost miserable equality of threat between the United States and Russia, if he attacks the United States on Libya, Grenada, SDI and signs an advertisement in *The Guardian* describing President Reagan as continuing a brutal terrorist war against Nicaragua, how can he expect to be taken seriously in Washington or other western capitals?

The Labour party has achieved a unique double. It has lost the respect of both Washington and Moscow. Soon it will be a triple crown as it will lose the respect of the British electorate as well.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Family Law Reform Bill *[Lords]*, the Minors' Contracts Bill *[Lords]*, the Recognition of Trusts Bill *[Lords]* and the Reverter of Sites Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Family Law Reform Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

10.1 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

In recent years, as part of the Government's programme of law reform the Lord Chancellor has tried each year to include at least one important item relating to family law.

The subject of illegitimacy has twice come before the Law Commission for England and Wales and has once come before the Scottish Law Commission. The purpose of the Bill is to enact generally the recommendations of the first report of the English Law Commission, subject to modifications proposed in the second report, deriving from the Scottish line of approach, which has already been enacted.

The importance of the subject may be illustrated by the fact that, in 1985, 126,000 children were born of parents who were not married to one another at the time of their children's birth. Illegitimacy, being a result of sexual intercourse outside marriage, may occur for a number of reasons. They range from indifference as to whether children are brought up within the framework of a marriage, to promiscuity, adultery and rape. None is facilitated or encouraged in the least degree by this Bill, which does nothing to undermine the institution of marriage but which does mitigate the impact upon children of the sins of their fathers—or for that matter their mothers—by eliminating so far as possible the legal disadvantages of illegitimacy.

Under the existing law there is discrimination that directly affects the position of both the illegitimate child and its father. The maintenance of such a child is subject to special restrictions affecting the jurisdiction of magistrates' courts; for instance no lump sum exceeding the relatively paltry figure of £500 may be awarded. An illegitimate child is subject to discrimination in its right to inheritance. It cannot, upon intestacy, inherit from a brother or sister or any other collateral, and though it can inherit from a parent it cannot inherit from any more remote ancestor. It cannot be the heir to an entailed interest. The father of an illegitimate child is also subject to discrimination by law, which may adversely affect the interest and welfare of the child.

Part I of the Bill contains only one clause, but it lays down the fundamental principle on which the Bill is based. Subsection (1) applies both to enactments and to instruments passed or made after the commencement of the Act. It provides that, unless a contrary intention appears, relationships are to be construed without regard to the marital status of the parents at the time of birth. This reflects the Scottish approach.

The policy of clause 1 is applied, by clause 2, only to certain specified past enactments. Clause 3 renders enforceable an agreement between parents relating to parental rights and duties, if, but only if, the court considers that the child will benefit by the agreement. Clause 4 and following clauses give the father of an illegitimate child various rights that he does not, at present, enjoy. It provides that the court may order that he may enjoy — subject to any contrary direction — jointly with the mother, if she is alive, or guardian, all parental rights and duties with respect to the child. The courts will, of course, have a discretion as to whether to make such an order and such an order will be made only if to do so is in the child's interest. It is envisaged that a typical situation in which such an order might be made would be where the child's parents have been living in a stable relationship which is ended by the mother's death. The effect of an order vesting all the parental rights and duties in the father would effectively be to put the father into the same legal position in relation to the child as he would have been in had he been married to the mother at the relevant time. The need for the ability to make such an order was emphasised in a recent case.

Under this Part of the Bill the father of an illegitimate child is also given certain other rights in relation to that child. He will be able to apply for these rights only if he already has rights to custody, or care and control over, the child in question.

Additionally, whenever it is in the child's interests to do so, the father of an illegitimate child who actually has custody of him is given certain rights as a "parent" under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 and the Child Care Act 1980. It is considered that the creation of these rights strikes the righ balance between the father's parental rights and the duties of the local authority in such a case. They also ensure that a father who, before a child is taken into care, has had responsibility for its upbringing, is put in the same position as its mother.

Part II makes general provision for custody and access orders and for financial provision on behalf of the illegitimate child.

The Guardianship of Minors Act 1971 is amended so that the courts will be able to make custody or access orders in relation to all children, whether or not legitimate, either on the application of either parent, or where a guardian has been appointed to the exclusion of the surviving parent, or where there is a disagreement between joint guardians, one of whom is a parent. When the court makes an order under those provisions it will in all cases apply the principle that the child's welfare is to be the first and paramount consideration.

Let me deal in a little more detail with the financial provision for illegitimate children. The Bill repeals the Affiliation Proceedings Act 1957. That Act is a direct descendant of the old bastardy laws, whose object was to relieve the parish of the burden of child maintenance if it could be placed on the father. The repeal of this Act abolishes the separate and distinct procedure for enforcing financial provision for an illegitimate child by affiliation proceedings. The Bill provides that orders for financial provision for all children, irrespective of their parents' marital status, are to be obtained by proceedings under the Guardianship of Minors Act 1971, as amended.

Accordingly, there will no longer be a time limit of three years after the birth of the child for the bringing of financial proceedings for illegitimate children. Secondly, there will no longer be any special rule of law requiring corroborative evidence that the putative father is the natural father of an illegitimate child. This distinctive requirement, which the Law Commission thought had no place in the civil law, dates back to the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, under which the overseers of the poor could recover from the putative father the cost to the parish of supporting the illegitimate child. Thirdly, the child's mother will be able to apply for a financial provision order in respect of an illegitimate child, notwithstanding that she is married to a man other than

the child's father. Finally, the special avenue of appeal from the magistrates court to the Crown court will no longer be available. Such an appeal has been unique to this area of domestic jurisdiction and has been an accident of history.

Under the Bill the High Court, the county courts and the magistrates' courts will all have jurisdiction to make orders for financial provision for an illegitimate child, as they already have for legitimate children. Magistrates' courts will cease to have exclusive jurisdiction. As with orders for custody and access, the courts will be empowered to make financial provision orders, either on the application of one of the child's parents, or where there is a guardian to the exclusion of the surviving parent, or where there is a disagreement between joint guardians, one of whom is a parent. Additionally, provision is made for applications by children over the age of 18 whose parents are separated and who are undergoing further education or training, or who have special needs, such as some form of physical handicap.

Part III deals with an illegitimate person's entitlement to certain property rights. This area of the law was last reformed by the Family Law Reform Act 1969. It made various changes which to some extent improved the position of an illegitimate person. However, that Act did not remove all the legal disadvantages which affect an illegitimate person in this regard. Part III remedies this deficiency.

The rules of intestacy are amended so that illegitimacy becomes, in general, irrelevant for the purposes of entitlement or intestacy; and this covers not only the succession of the illegitimate child to the property of others but the rights of others to succeed to the estate of an illegitimate person who dies intestate. Various reforms are effected which benefit illegitimate persons in relation to their rights of succession under wills and other dispositions, including entailed interests.

None of these changes affects succession where a person dies intestate before the coming into force of the provisions, or succession under a will made before their coming into force. None of these reforms will alter the descent of titles of honour, or the devolution of property along with such titles.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Am I right in understanding that adopted children will have all the rights of natural children except that they will not be able to succeed to a peerage?

The Solicitor-General: I shall deal with my hon. Friend's question about adoptive children in more detail later, if he will permit me to do so.

Part IV provides a new remedy by way of a right to seek a declaration by the courts, to those who seek to establish the facts of their own parentage. For example, there may be a question of future entitlement to property which turns on a dispute as to parentage. The best evidence to resolve such a question, such as blood tests, might no longer be available at the time when the property came to be distributed. In such cases a potential claimant might wish to seek a declaration of parentage at the earlier stage when that evidence is still available.

Part V facilitates the recording of paternity on the birth certificate of an illegitimate child, and part VI deals with a number of miscellaneous and supplemental matters. The most significant clause in this Part is clause 27, which deals with the legal status of a child born as the result of the artificial insemination of a married woman by a donor. When the woman is artificially inseminated with the semen of someone other than her husband, and her husband consents to such insemination, the clause provides that the child is to be treated in law for all purposes as the child of the marriage.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that that would apply equally to a test tube baby that was born to an anonymous donor, be it a father, a mother or both parents?

The Solicitor-General: As I have said, it applies to the artificial insemination of a married woman by a donor in circumstances in which the husband consents to that insemination with the semen of someone other than her husband.

The policy of clause 27 has been endorsed in the report of the Warnock committee of inquiry into human fertilisation and embryology. The clause was part of the draft Bill that was attached to the Law Commission's first report in 1982, but after the publication of its second report, the Law Commission indicated that it would have preferred the matter to be dealt with as part of any future comprehensive legislation on the issues discussed in the Warnock report. However the Government considered that the clause should remain in this Bill. They did not think that a Bill that removed the discrimination against illegitimacy would be just without clarifying the position of the AID child at least to the extent that Warnock approves. If need be, the clause can be amended later in the light of any future legislation. But to delay an agreed policy until full legislation on the Warnock report could not, in our view, be justified.

The Bill is an important law reform measure that will help illegitimate children to have as normal a family life as possible. Because such children may be born in unstable family circumstances, it is of great importance that the law should not inflict any additional disadvantages upon them. The Bill seeks as far as possible to remove the remaining legal disadvantage from which they suffer. I acknowledge with gratitude the work that the Law Commission put into the preparation of the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

10.14 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): First, I thank the Solicitor-General for his detailed explanation of the Bill's contents and for letting me have sight of the notes on clauses, which have been prepared to help him make his presentation. It is helpful for me, on behalf of the Opposition, to have sight of the enormous amount of detail that is contained in the document. It helps to deal with detailed matters that perhaps we would otherwise have trawled in Committee. I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

The purpose of the Bill is to enact the recommendations of the first report of the English Law Commission, which is LC 118, which was modified into the second report, which is LC 157. The object of the Bill is to remove any avoidable discrimination against, or stigma attaching to, children born out of wedlock. I welcome that principle unreservedly. The policy that lies behind the Bill is that to the greatest possible extent the legal position of a child born to unmarried parents should be the same as that of

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

a child born to married parents. This will bring the United Kingdom into line with the Council of Europe convention on the legal status of children born out of wedlock and with the European Convention on Human Rights.

This is clearly an important subject. In 1985, there were 126,000 children born to unmarried parents. At present children who are born out of wedlock are discriminated against in a number of ways. For example, in the provision of maintenance, there is special jurisdiction exercised by magistrates. They cannot award a lump sum for maintenance in excess of £500. The law on inheritance provides that a child born out of wedlock cannot inherit on an intestacy from a brother or sister. He or she can inherit from a parent but not from remoter ancestors. Although it is less common, a third example of discrimination is that the father of a child who is born out of wedlock is also subject to discrimination. If he is awarded custody of the child, no maintenance contribution can be ordered from the mother, irrespective of her means. Further, a father's consent is not required for the adoption of such a child or the marriage of such a child who is under the age of 18 years.

Clause 1 applies to instruments passed both before and after the commencement of the Act and provides that in general, unless a contrary intention is evident, relationships are to be construed without regard to the marital status of a person's parents at the time of his or her birth. In clause 4, certain rights are given to the father of a child who is born out of wedlock. The courts are given a discretion to order that the father can enjoy jointly with the mother or guardian of the child all parental rights and duties. Furthermore, there are a number of rights that are given specifically to the father. The father has the right to apply to the courts for directions when the parents disagree on questions of the child's welfare. There is now the right to apply to become the child's guardian on the death of the mother, and the right to appoint a testamentary guardian. As well as this, the father has the right to object to a testamentary guardian appointed by the mother. The father's agreement is now to be a precondition to the child being adopted or to him or her getting married under the age of 18 years.

The Solicitor-General referred rightly to the financial provisions. The Bill abolishes the Affiliation Proceedings Act 1957. This removes the separate procedure which exists for enforcing provisions for children born out of wedlock by affiliation proceedings. The procedure will be that laid down under the Guardianship of Minors Act 1971. In other words, the position will be the same for all children. The High Court and county courts will have jurisdiction to make orders to provide financially for children born out of wedlock.

The Solicitor-General referred also to property rights. The rules of intestacy are to be amended so that illegitimacy becomes irrelevant for most purposes as regards entitlement to property on an intestacy. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) will, I assume, be pleased to be able to anticipate good news in later years. The descent or devolution of titles or property which devolves with titles is unaffected by the Bill. I do not know whether that is good news for the hon. Gentleman, but he has expressed an interest.

Mr. Thurnham: It is my understanding that an adopted child is not in a position to succeed to a peerage. That is my reading of the position, and I consider it to be unfortunate.

Mr. Brown: Obviously the hon. Gentleman is not pleased enough. It is my understanding that the Bill makes no change in that direction, so perhaps it does not go as far as the hon. Gentleman would like.

The Bill contains a number of miscellaneous provisions. There will be a new remedy whereby a child born out of wedlock can apply for a declaration from the court to seek to establish the facts of his or her parentage. Paternity can be recorded on the birth certificate of a child born out of wedlock. Where the husband consents to his wife conceiving by artificial insemination, the child is to be treated as a child of the marriage.

All of that is welcome. However, there is a major anomaly that we shall wish to trawl in Committee with an amendment from the Opposition. That deals with the effect of the Bill on anomalies as regards citizenship. The principal defect of the Bill is that it does nothing to remove the anomaly created by the British Nationality Act 1981. The problem was stated clearly by the Law Commission in paragraph 3.22 on page 13 of its report. It states:

"A legitimate, legitimated or adopted person can derive British citizenship under the new British nationality Act 1981 from his mother or from his father. An illegitimate person can only derive citizenship from his mother because for the purposes of the Act "father" means only the father of a legitimate or legitimated person."

That issue has received widespread public attention, especially from pressure groups, particularly the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and the Commission for Racial Equality. Briefly, the arguments are that the Bill is designed to

"remove, as far as possible, the legal disadvantages of illegitimacy so far as they affect the illegitimate child."

By failing to deal with the question of nationality the Bill is subject to a glaring omission. The British Nationality Act 1981 created the problem. The Act ended the conferral of British citizenship by birth. British citizenship is the key to the right of abode, which makes the problem all the more important. By virtue of the 1981 Act children born in the United Kingdom are British by birth only if one parent is British or is settled in the United Kingdom. By section 50(9) of the Act the word "parent" does not include the father of an illegitimate child. Therefore, if his mother is a foreigner the child does not obtain British citizenship. Similarly, fathers of illegitimate children born abroad can confer no rights of citizenship.

When the 1981 Act was in Committee the Government said that they were not dealing with the problem because the Law Commission was reconsidering the position of illegitimate children. That reconsideration brought about the legislation that we are discussing today. However, the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) said:

"If an acceptable solution could be found, the matter could be dealt with by legislation based on the Law Commission's reports." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 17 February 1981; c. 102.]

The Commission argued strongly for the change. In paragraph 11.9 of its report it said:

"we see no reason of principle which would cause us to change the proposal . . . that non-marital children should be enabled to acquire British citizenship from their fathers on the same terms as does a marital child under the existing law."

However, it did not draft proposals, because it was unable to make definite proposals as regards Scotland.

In another place amendments were sought to rectify the position and the noble Lord Silkin was the principal proponent. The Lord Chancellor stated that he and the Government had no objections to the general principle that a child should be able to acquire citizenship from his father. However, the Lord Chancellor itemised two objections. The first was that the Bill applies only to England and Wales whereas citizenship is a matter for the United Kingdom. He said that that required consultation. Secondly, he said that there could be difficulties in establishing the paternity of children born abroad. I have to say that that looks like time-wasting. There does not appear to be evidence that the issue will be contentious. Further, it is five years since the Law Commission made its proposal. Why has nothing been done since then? What has been done since the matter was raised in the Lords? Where do the Government stand on the issue now? We shall find out in Committee, if not later tonight.

To deprive children born out of wedlock of their right to British nationality is to deprive them of a fundamental human right. To fail to correct that glaring omission in the Bill and to pass the buck between the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department seems to be cruel and contrary to the whole object behind the Bill. If the Government do not deal with the issue now, it is fair to ask, when are they going to get round to it? That is the only major matter that we shall be wishing to pursue in Committee. However, there are three other minor matters that I shall trail now.

The first is the representations that I have received, and I am sure that Conservative Members have received, from the Magistrates Association. It proposes an amendment to the Bill to rectify what it describes as an anomaly as regards illegitimate children. Its case is that section 16(1) of the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts Act 1978 provides that:

"Either party to a marriage may . . . apply to a magistrates' court for an order under this section."

The section empowers the court to grant injunctions to parties to a marriage to restrain domestic violence. The Magistrates Association argues that it is in the interest of law and order that small children should be protected from violence in the home, whether or not their parents are married. I am sure that no hon. Member will disagree with that.

The association goes on to argue that the children of married parents are afforded this protection by section 16, but it is contrary to the principles of natural justice that children of unmarried parents should be treated differently. While unmarried mothers and their children can obtain injunctive relief from a county court judge under section 1 of the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976, the Magistrates Association argues that county court judges are not as easily accessible and available as magistrates. Therefore, protection should be extended to non-married people and their children by amending the Bill.

As I understand it, the Lord Chancellor argues that the Bill is not an appropriate vehicle for such an amendment because it would be outside the scope of the Bill. While it affects children who are born out of wedlock, it has wider-ranging implications and consultation with child welfare authorities is necessary. I can see that there is some force in this, and I am certainly not pre-judging the issue. Unlike the issue of nationality, I still have an open mind on this subject.

The Law Commission, in its report which led to the 1978 Act, decided only to extend the magistrates' jurisdiction to married persons, and clearly there was some good reason behind that decision. While the change in the law is desirable, the protection from county courts is aleady there and the Bill may not be the right place for such an amendment. There will be an opportunity for us to explore these points again more thoroughly in Committee.

Two other points have been made to me. The first is the use of the word "minor" rather than "child" in the Guardianship of Minors Act 1971. A detailed commentary on this has been sent to me by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). He was sent it by the Campaign for Justice in Divorce. It is closely printed, if not closely argued, and the substance of the case that it makes is one at which we may be able to look in Committee.

The final argument that is raised on the Bill came in *The Sunday Times* on 28 January by a journalist, Maggie Drumond, in an article entitled "The Reality of Being Illegitimate". She argues that the real problem is not the legal stigma of illegitimacy, which the Bill proposes to remove, but the poverty that comes from being in a one-parent family. She argues that unmarried mothers are poor because they have difficulties in earning a decent living.

The thrust of the article, which criticises the Bill, is that it does not give fathers rights but merely the opportunity to apply to courts for rights, and that women will be terrified of men trying to get their hands on the children. Furthermore, the Bill

"with its emphasis on men's rights is for the trendy, joint non marital partners with their cohabitation cookbook."

I can see the case that Ms. Drumond is trying to make, in that the points about poverty have some force, and I sympathise with them. However, I cannot see that, by themselves, they make a case against the Bill. The Bill seeks to remove the legal discriminations against children born out of wedlock. That is its narrow purpose, and I support it in that narrow purpose. It does not deal with wider issues, because it was never intended that it should. On its own terms, it is clearly to be welcomed. While there are matters to be explored in Committee, I am sure that the measure will, in principle, command a great deal of support from all sides of the House.

Family Law Reform Bill *[Lords]*

10.30 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I have no doubt that the Bill has been brought here this evening, and dealt with in the other place, with the best of intentions. Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has never introduced a Bill without impeccable intentions. However, I must say that I am worried about some of the Bill's implications.

Last December, a consultation document was presented to Parliament by a number of Cabinet Ministers. My right hon. and learned Friend was not among them, but the Lord Chancellor was. The document is entitled "Legislation on Human Infertility Services and Embryo Research". It concludes:

"The Government's intention is to introduce legislation on the issues dealt with in the Warnock Report but it believes that further detailed discussion is advisable before a Bill is brought forward."

Whatever detailed discussion has taken place, it has not yet been concluded. I note in the consultation paper that views are invited up until the end of June this year. It must be at least a month since the Bill sprang to life in another place—long before the June deadline.

The Bill deals in one particular with precisely the matters to which that paragraph refers—with Warnock matters. However, it does not deal with them with the benefit of considered views, for which the paper specifically asks. Clause 27 is about AID, which was one of the principal issues dealt with in the Warnock report. However, instead of waiting for the results of consultations about AID, clause 27 repeats word for word a clause drafted by the Law Commission as far back as 1982.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to that; but here is the clause, put down in the Bill with no regard to the discussion paper or to what it might throw up, no regard to the careful and detailed considerations in the Warnock report and no appreciation of the need to update a Law Commission document of 1982—with, in fact, no apparent knowledge that the Law Commission has now repudiated its original 1982 wording. The Law Commission is quite clear on that: it has recognised that the clause is now deficient, bearing in mind what has come to light since 1982 in Warnock. In October last, the Law Commission threw cold water on its own wording, saying that it deplored

"piecemeal measures which may later have to be reconsidered."

I put it to the House that that is exactly what clause 27 is doing. I feel strongly that the clause is slotted into the Bill in a piecemeal way, and that, if it is passed in its present form, there will have to be changes later.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend accept that more than 1,000 children have been born by the AID process who would become legitimate with the passage of the Bill, and that, if it is felt at a later stage that the House should amend any part of the Bill, that can of course be done?

Dame Jill Knight: My hon. Friend does not seem to understand that AID is not just about illegitimacy. There is more than one aspect to AID; it should not be treated as though there were only one aspect to be considered. Lord Denning said about AID:

"The operation is fraught with tremendous consequences for husband and wife—and the child that is to be."

However, clause 27 treats it as of no great account. Under that clause, AID can be practised without any explanation to either party. Even written consent is unnecessary. The wife can simply ask her husband privately if he consents to AID, and if he says he does he is bound to accept the child as his. Indeed, the clause is so lax in its treatment of AID that nobody would be able later to prove that the question had ever been asked. If the husband denied it, nobody could prove it one way or the other. No record is either made or kept.

Let us suppose that a child born as a result of AID were to be handicapped, or diseased, or of a different ethnic origin from the husband. He could very easily repudiate it. The consultation paper says:

"Counselling is seen as an essential element in the provision of infertility services. The Government accepts that couples should receive counselling and would be glad to have further views on the development of such services and whether such counselling should be a statutory requirement."

I agree with that recognition of the importance of counselling. The Government agreed at one time about its importance, because they say so in the consultation paper. I wonder what made them change their mind. Who put it to them that none of these matters is of great importance and that they could easily be slipped in piecemeal later on? The consequences are enormous. Proper weight is not given to the matter in the clause as it stands.

As for the birth certificate, the consultation paper says:

"It is essential to maintain the integrity and reliability of the birth register as a record of biological fact."

According to the Bill, the birth certificate will be falsified. I recognise that the intention is to do what is best in the interests of the child, but—

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Dame Jill Knight: I hope that my hon. Friend will permit me to make some progress. I do not want to detain the House for long. I shall give way once more, but once more only.

Mr. Thurnham: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. Is she aware that the latest medical research shows that approximately one fifth of the population does not have the genetic father whose name appears on the birth certificate?

Dame Jill Knight: That is totally irrelevant. First, we do not know it for a fact. Secondly, there is a great deal of difference between what happened in the past and legislating for a completely different set of circumstances. And that is what we are doing tonight.

Under these rather loose arrangements, the child will never know the truth. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) may say that other children will never know the truth, either, but that does not mean that children whom we are permitting to be brought into the world should be denied what Warnock clearly stated was their right. A child would never be able to give a true answer about the family's medical history. It would know only half of it.

Warnock, speaking of children born as a result of AID, recommends that

"On reaching 18 the child should have access to basic information about the donor's ethnic origin and genetic health. Legislation should be enacted to provide the right of access."

Those are wise words. Probably they followed on the heels of earlier legislation about adoption: that a child should have the right to know about its background and should be able to contact its mother.

The consultation paper regards it as absolutely essential that there should be a registration and recording system for children who are born as a result of AID and that a central record of AID births should be kept.

This carries out exactly the recommendation of Warnock which says:

"The clandestine practice of AID could be very harmful."

It says that it should be available only on a properly organised basis. If hon. Members want to look this up, they will find it in chapter 13 of the Warnock report where the licensing arrangements are clearly described:

"We recommend that the provision of AID without a licence for that purpose should be an offence."

It could not be much more clearly stated than that. Of course, it is not an offence now. That is one of the reasons why some of us are anxious that legislation on Warnock should be introduced. But it still will not be an offence if this Bill is unamended. The Bill gives, as it were, a blessing to AID without giving the child its rights.

In the Bill AID is given less importance than an anti-tetanus jab. A record has to be made of a child having an anti-tetanus jab. One knows what is in the syringe and where it came from, but at the moment any agency can provide an AID service. It can collect semen from a donor without asking him any questions or keeping any record. It can pay him and then take payment from a woman to be inseminated, without any details of the donor being made known to her. It could be a lucrative business. Dozens of women could be inseminated from the one donor. Wherever there is a way of making money in this wicked world, people will use it.

I dispute the figures given earlier. I understand that it is estimated that about 1,700 children are born every year by AID. There is no record of them; no one will ever know the secret of their birth. Perhaps that will be a good thing, but it would be good for them to know even if others do not.

The implications of clause 27 have not been thought through carefully. The production of a child by this method is far more important than the question of its legitimacy. If I am fortunate enough to be a member of the Standing Committee, I shall seek to amend the Bill.

10.42 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I have not yet had the good fortune to come out in the top few in the private Members' ballot, but year on year, ever since I have been an hon. Member, I have given an undertaking to concerned groups that were it my good fortune to come high in the ballot I would present a Bill which would remove the stigma of illegitimacy.

The Bill that I would have presented probably would not have been as well drafted as the Bill before us, which has been drafted professionally; it has had the advantage of two Law Commission reports and has also been through the other place before coming to us. I congratulate the Solicitor-General and the Government on taking the initiative this year to bring this Bill before us.

It is an important Bill which will remove one of the major stigmata which still exist in our society and which discriminate against innocent people. I ask the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who has raised a serious and important issue, to bear in mind that what the Bill, including clause 27, is concerned with is not the niceties of medical ethics, nor the rules as how AID should be controlled, although they are important, but about what happens to the people who emerge after AID has taken place, people who never asked to be born but who find themselves in the world with an unpleasant and unhelpful stigma attached to them but for the Bill. It is right that the stigma should be removed in this way.

I seek to draw two anomalies to the attention of the Solicitor-General. One has been mentioned in detail by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I do not think that repetition would improve the point. That point refers to the anomaly of children who are the illegitimate children of a British father and a non-British mother, yet who cannot acquire British citizenship. That is a very important, unfair anomaly which ought to be rectified and can be rectified in Committee.

The second anomaly I want to draw to the Solicitor-General's attention relates to Scotland. The place where one is born is often a matter of chance. A mother may be on holiday in Scotland on the day when her child is born prematurely. No doubt the waters of the braes can sometimes encourage an early and successful birth. Someone may live in Langholm where hospital facilities are available at Dumfries in Scotland and at Carlisle in England. If a child is born as a result of artificial insemination by a donor with the consent of the father, according to the Bill if the birth takes place in Dumfries or even one mile to the north of the Anglo-Scottish border, the child will be deprived of the advantage of clause 27. If, on the other hand, the child is born in Carlisle or even one mile south of the border, the child will gain the advantage of clause 27. The English-born child will be regarded as legitimate and will have all the advantages, which I applaud and support, which arise from that clause.

My hon. Friends and I have received numerous representations from Scotland and particularly well argued representations from the Law Society of Scotland. It stressed what could sometimes happen when a child is born rather suddenly. On such occasions, a child may be born in an ambulance. What will the Government do when the child is born as the ambulance is crossing the Anglo-Scottish border? Artificial insemination in England and artificial insemination in Scotland are artificial insemination of the same nature. Birth in England and birth in Scotland should be birth of an equal standard. Those who are concerned with family law in Scotland can see absolutely no reason why clause 27 should not be extended to Scotland.

I invite the Solicitor-General to consider that point very carefully. It seems that although some arguments have been put forward by his hon. Friend the Minister responsible for industry and home affairs, no doubt concentrating on home affairs rather than industry, none of those arguments is convincing against the proposition that for everyone born in any part of the United Kingdom there should be a united standard for birth and legitimacy.

10.48 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): As my right and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has explained, the effect of the Bill is to remove many of the distinctions that exist between legitimate and illegitimate children—or, to use

[Mr. Roger Sims]

the alternative phrase produced by the Law Commission which it subsequently decided to drop, "marital and non-marital" children.

It has been argued, especially by the Lord Bishop of London, that the effect of the Bill appears to undermine the status of marriage and the family. I can understand that view. I was critical of legislation passed by the House which reduced to one year that period after which divorce was possible. If that did not positively encourage entering into marriage lightly by making the break so easy, at least Parliament appeared to be saying that the bond of matrimony was not as serious or as important as most of us had believed it to be. The criticism that I made at that time was justified, because we were dealing with people who chose to get married or chose to get divorced. In this instance we are talking about the status of children who, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, have not even asked to be born, and who find themselves either legitimate or illegitimate.

It has been well argued that there is no such thing as an illegitimate child, that there are only illegitimate parents. Therefore, it is right to make what are mainly modest changes and to remove some of the disadvantages suffered by children born out of wedlock. Despite the arguments that have put forward, I do not think that doing that undermines the instutition of marriage. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General will make that point abundantly clear.

One of the surprising omissions from the Bill, has already been mentioned by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). It is the matter of nationality and I do not need to cover again the ground covered by the hon. Gentleman. The Lord Chancellor said in the other place that there were other complications in this matter, that it was too complex and would need a United Kingdom Bill that would have to be preceded by a good deal of consultation. Surely it is not too difficult to include nationality in the Bill. I shall return to that point.

I am especially concerned, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) about clause 27. There are two grounds for objection to that clause. It allows for the husband of a woman who is the beneficiary of artificial insemination by donor to be registered as the father of the child. Surely that cannot be right. It is legalising a lie. The husband cannot be the father. That is the whole reason why the couple have gone in for AID, yet the husband is being recorded on a legal document as being the father.

If it is not a contradiction in terms, this surely creates a legal fiction. These are not my words, because for them we have the authority of none other than Lord Denning. Without repeating his arguments, I invite hon. Members to read his effective speeches in the other place on this topic. I was surprised that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor got very cross about this issue and allowed himself to be party to what is, in effect, legalising a deception. I hope that in Committee we can persuade my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General that that is the case and that this clause is inappropriate on those grounds.

My second ground for objection to clause 27 is that about which my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston spoke. To use shorthand, it seems to be anticipating Warnock; or rather the legislation that we expect in the fullness of time to stem from the Warnock report and the consultation document. My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston touched on only a few of the complex issues that surround this whole matter. It raises a lot of moral, religious and legal issues.

I am more sympathetic to the general thrust of Warnock than, perhaps, are my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and some of my hon. Friends. However, the Government were absolutely right to say that this issue should be dealt with as a whole. We are dealing not only with this issue, but with many others, such as experiments on foetuses. There are many aspects with regard to this matter, yet, here one part of Warnock is being plucked out and popped into the Bill. As I mentioned a moment ago, the Lord Chancellor argued that nationality was too complex an issue to be included in the Bill. Yet here a tiny bit of AID—which is just as complex as nationality—is being included in the Bill.

Clause 27 refers only to AID. What about the donation of an egg or embryo? That apparently is not covered. Clause 27 is at best premature and is inappropriate to the Bill. That is not only my view. My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston has quoted from part of the consultation document, and I shall quote from another:

> "The Government would find it helpful to have further views, therefore, on the way in which a system of registering and recording children born as a result of AID or egg or embryo donation might be set up which would: *(a)* best meet the child's need for access to the truth about his genetic origins and some information about his genetic father; *(b)* satisfy the family's need for privacy; *(c)* take account of the donor's wish for anonymity."

The Government are saying that they would find it helpful to have further views, but they are apparently ploughing ahead with this legislation.

In its second report, after referring to the development of techniques, the Law Commission says:

> "It may therefore be desirable to have a comprehensive scheme dealing with all these techniques, which raise similar difficulties in defining parenthood and have implications beyond family law. To avoid piecemeal measures which may later have to be reconsidered, we can see some advantage in deferring legislation on this subject until a comprehensive scheme can be achieved."

To which I add, hear, hear.

I shall refer briefly to two issues, one of which is included in the Bill and one which is excluded. Schedule 4 repeals subsections (10) and (13) of section 20 of the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts Act 1978, and thus precludes a young person from applying to a magistrates' court to revive a maintenance order. I do not understand why that should be. Perhaps it is a matter that we can pursue in Committee.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery referred to representations by the Magistrates Association and the Justices Clerks Society. They believe that the opportunity should be taken to extend the powers of the courts to make orders protecting from violence, or the threat of violence, co-habitees and illegitimate children, a power which at present is limited to parties to a marriage and their children. The Lord Chancellor's Department has resisted their pleas. I hope that in Committee we can persuade my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General Friend that such a move should take place and that the Bill is an appropriate vehicle for the change.

10.58 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I am profoundly unhappy about the Bill. It is curious that the Government, and indeed almost all Governments, stand aside from what most people regard as moral questions, such as abortion and obscenity, and relegate them to the initiatives of private Members. The social trends in society, which often are even more morally significant, are reserved for Government legislation. Thereby, the permissive society, which most of us deplore, has been advanced in the Government's own legislation with regard to matrimony and divorce law. Parliament seems quite unwilling or unable to arrest and even sometimes seems to encourage the moral decline which is in evidence in violent crime, lawlessness, sexual abuse and cruelty to children.

The Bill's objective is to remove the stigma of illegitimacy from children born outside wedlock. First, last and always that is a good objective which I shall always support. However, will the Bill remove the stigma? Whatever we do about changing the law on the legal status of such children, we cannot remove the social stigma which has no basis in law. I sympathise with the lady who said that the stigma is created by the poverty of the one-parent family.

Why do we have to do this laudable thing in a way which weakens the institution of marriage? I have no doubt that the Bill will lead to a decline in the number of marriages, and to a weakening of the institution of marriage generally and of the conventional family. Children should be born with the maximum chance of happiness within marriage.

It will be argued that it is no longer necessary to be married. Many people marry—they say—for the sake of the children. The Bill's objective is to make it unnecessary to marry for the sake of the children, because it lifts the moral stigma, but the Bill probably will not do that.

Unfortunately it is now all too common, even in public life, for people to live together, to have children but not to be married. We are told that 126,000 illegitimate children were born in 1985. I understand that 53,000 of them were born as the result of an unstable relationship, not to a man and woman living together as husband and wife in a loving relationship. In some cases the identity of the father is not known. That is one of the obstacles to granting British citizenship to the children of British citizens wo have had an illegitimate relationship. There is no right to British citizenship when the father is unknown. The 53,000 births resulting from unstable relationships is far too many and I believe that the number is rising.

The Bill's worst provision is contained in clause 27, with which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) dealt so well. I adopt everything that she said about it. I emphasise the total rejection of the idea that one can legislate to make true a falsehood. It is an example of the end justifying the means. It was done in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 under which we made it a criminal offence to tell the truth about a man's past, even though that truth was far more preferable to the legal fiction for which it was substituted. Here we have a proposal that a person who is not the father shall be declared to be the father for all legal purposes. Can that possibly be justified? Clause 27 is not justified for the reasons that have been adduced not only by my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston but by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). I strongly support them in their rejection of that clause.

I hope that all those criticisms that have been made by my hon. Friends will be seriously considered before the Bill is allowed to become law.

11.5 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I should like to congratulate the Government on introducing the Bill. Some people may believe that it could have been brought in as a private Member's Bill. It is an excellent tribute to the Government that they have introduced the Bill. It is also a remarkable tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor who, in his 80th year, has brought forward a Bill containing not only all the measures recommended by the Law Reform Committee, but also clause 27. Although I have grave reservations about this clause, I believe that it is a remarkable tribute to the Lord Chancellor that he has grasped this nettle and attempted to tackle this difficult problem.

I was pleased that in the other place the Lord Chancellor said:

"To delay an agreed policy until full legislation on the Warnock Report could not, at any rate in my view, be justified.—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 27 November 1986; Vol. 482, c. 652.]

I fully endorse that approach.

I wish to speak to three issues that I have touched upon in interventions. First, I believe that it would be remiss of the House to pass legislation that prevented an adopted child from succeeding to a title when, in every other respect, the adopted child would be treated as a natural child. I believe that that measure had an easier passage in the other place than it deserves here.

I hope that test-tube children born as a result of a donor either father, mother, or even both—are treated in the same way as AID children are treated in clause 27. Dame Mary Warnock said in a letter to me that

"it would be totally illogical not to".

The numbers involved are small, but I recognise the force of the Lord Chancellor's comments when he wrote to me to say that he feared that my suggestion

"is precisely the straw which would break my camel's back this year"

because of the need to get legislation through the House. I hope that in the urgency to progress legislation we will not sacrifice test-tube children on the altar of electoral expediency.

The main thrust of my remarks relates to clause 27 and how we regard the fathers of AID children. At present, the register of births stands, on the face of it, as the true genetic record. It is an act of perjury deliberately to give false information on registration. In clause 27 of the Bill the Lord Chancellor is suggesting that we give legal sanction to biologically untrue facts. Some hon. Members have said that it is giving legal sanction to lies. However, the Lord Chancellor is acknowledging the farce of the registration of births as it now stands.

As I mentioned to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), there are some new blood tests available, working on the genetic DNA test, that can establish beyond all reasonable doubt to factors of one in a trillion the true parentage. It is known as genetic fingerprinting. I do not believe that it is widely known that such genetic tests have shown that, in this country and in the United States, approximately one fifth

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

of the population appear to have a false father written on the birth certificate based on biological terms. Therefore, at present, one fifth of the population are under a delusion as to who their fathers are.

The evidence that I have——

Dame Jill Knight: I have been following my hon. Friend's remarks closely. How will that be known unless every child has a blood test for that purpose?

Mr. Thurnham: It is done only on a sample basis; but on that basis it has been established in tests in the United Kingdom and America that about one fifth of the population do not have their true fathers' names on their birth certificates. The interesting fact is that, apparently, the higher up the social scale, the worse the percentage is. That leads one to wonder whether some of their Lordships, who laid such stress on truth during their debate on the Bill, should have been in that House in the first place. Perhaps their arguments were a little confused on that point.

I mentioned the problem to the Lord Chancellor, who said that it would have constituted an even greater problem in Edwardian days. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) should bear that in mind when he considers the moral decline of today.

Birth registration is needed for two distinct reasons. One is to provide a true genetic record, and the other is to secure the legal position of the child. Understandably, if there is any potential difficulty, the legal position is bound to be uppermost in a mother's mind when registering the birth of her child. As the birth register is accessible to the public, the mother does not want to burden her child with a cruel social stigma if it is socially more acceptable to put down the name of the man who is to be the child's legal parent—usually, the husband.

The true identity of the father must always be regarded as an essentially private matter, and I should be much opposed to any attempt to require public disclosure of such information. As drafted, clause 27 sanctions an existing fact—that the register of births is not a true genetic record. However, if such a sanction is to be given, it should be given consciously, with full awareness of its implications, and provision must be made for its results.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor talked of our manifest duty under the Bill. Our duty must be to the children. Paragraph 30 of the Government's consultation paper—as my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston has just said — considers it essential to maintain the integrity and reliability of the birth register as a record of biological fact, and to ensure the child's right of access as an adult to an accurate record of the biological facts of his birth. That is an important part of an adopted child's search for his identity.

I suggest that clause 27 should be amended so as honestly and truthfully to provide for the legal status of donor children. I urge the Lord Chancellor not to admit implicitly that the register of births is a bundle of falsehoods but to establish a modern, accurate and workable registration system. It is not good enough to say that we must wait until the Warnock report has been implemented. The British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering have advocated that the ideal solution, if time allowed and resources were immediately available, would be to legislate now for the legal status of AID and ovum donation children, and, simultaneously, to provide a system of registration of births that would allow privacy to the families concerned without departing from the principle of a biologically accurate record of births.

In the absence of a statutory licensing authority of the type envisaged by Warnock, the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering felt that it would not yet be possible to devise a satisfactory amendment to clause 27 and that, to use a child care term, the least detrimental alternative would now appear to be to omit clause 27 altogether, and to press for speedy legislation on all the Warnock proposals, with some prospect of retrospective legislation in the case of the legal status of the children concerned.

I suggest that we already have what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described as an excellent voluntary licensing authority, which is now in its third year of operation and which could provide the basis for a satisfactory system of registration of donor births. There should be two registers: a publicly accessible register of legal parentage, and a separate confidential register of biological parentage which would be kept securely, with access given only to children who had reached the age of 18.

It is right and proper for us to use this opportunity to grasp the nettle. I support the aims of clause 27. I would not like it to be deleted; I would like it to be taken a stage further so that we have a register of legal parentage and another of biological parentage, which could be accessed by the individual concerned at the age of 18.

11.15 pm

The Solicitor-General: Notwithstanding the hour, which is a good deal later than the clock usually shows when that expression is employed in another place, we have had an excellent and highly informed debate which I am sure presages a high quality, although I hope not protracted, Committee stage.

I am grateful for the welcome that has been accorded to the Bill by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). There is general understanding of the injustice of the stigma which attaches to the innocent product of an extra-marital union.

I know that that view is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who said that he would always stand for the removal of that unjust slur. He described it as a social slur. I am not sure to what extent social disadvantage exists today, but it is common ground that legal disadvantages should be removed whenever practicable.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East criticised the Bill, not for what it does but for omitting to make any provision for the acquisition of citizenship by a person who is currently regarded as illegitimate in law. It is important to remember that the Bill is designed to give effect to the recommendations of the Law Commission. We have to deal with one thing at a time.

If my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor had tried to add to the Bill, provisions attaching to nationality, he would have had far less chance, by reason of its increased scope, of securing a place in the legislative programme.

I acknowledge with gratitude what my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East said in praise of the Lord

Chancellor for having succeeded in bringing the Bill before Parliament. There would have been less chance of success if the Bill's scope had been enlarged in a way which would have led to it avoiding the criticism that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery levelled against it.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East raised two relatively minor matters which, no doubt, we shall explore in Committee, and mentioned a third to say, with his customary fairness, that he does not agree with it. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) spoke with feeling about clause 27. She was critical of the inclusion of the clause. I have no doubt that we shall have interesting and important discussions on this issue in Committee. It must be remembered, however, that my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor was bringing in a measure as comprehensive in its scope as it was practical in his view to introduce. To deal with the injustices that now afflict those who are regarded in law as illegitimately born would have produced a glaring omission if it were decided to leave out the aspect of the Warnock report that bore upon the legal consequences of AID. We are not talking about the difficult issues that surround the circumstances in which AID should be permitted, and, if permitted, regulated, and the Bill will not affect them. Many complex issues are involved upon which diverse and opposing views are held, and it is right that they should continue to be the subject of consultation.

We are concerned with the consequence in law of a human being who is the product of such insemination. Such a person, if the law remains unchanged, is regarded as illegitimate. I acknowledge the difficulty and complexity of the issues about which my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston is rightly concerned—AID and the thrust of the Warnock committee's report—but I do not believe that her strictures on the inclusion of clause 27 were wholly justified. I note the recommendation of the Warnock committee's report—I shall quote from the summary—which states:

"The AID child should in law be treated as the legitimate child of its mother and her husband, where they have both consented to the treatment."

The Bill provides as it does only where there is consent. As for whether consent might be contested and withdrawn, for example, it is important to note in clause 27 that there is a presumption that

"unless it is proved to the satisfaction of any court by which the matter has to be determined that the other party to that marriage did not consent to the insemination, the child shall be treated in law".

My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston makes an important point in law on the proof of insemination, and one to which I am sure that we shall be giving attention later.

Dame Jill Knight: I am grateful for what my right hon. and learned Friend has said, but if it is an argument for leaving clause 27 as it is and for saying that all the complications of dealing with AID can be dealt with outside the Bill, why not include all the children that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) is concerned about? If we are including AID, why not IVF and surrogacy, for example? What is good for one group of the infertility parent syndrome is surely good for all.

The Solicitor-General: The answer to my hon. Friend's question is that the recommendation to which I have referred relates to the AID child. I do not doubt that there were good reasons why the Law Commission did not extend the recommendation more widely, and I think that we should concentrate on the recommendations of the Law Commission. I have no doubt that the issue will be raised again, but I doubt whether my hon. Friend would wish to see the clause have a wider ambit. I think that the underlying reasons are sufficient for the drafting of the clause as it stands, and I hope that the House will agree to that.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery raised some interesting points about jurisdiction, and not the only ones that can be raised by reason of the separate legal system that is enjoyed, if that is the word, in Scotland. I am grateful for the welcome that he gave the Bill.

I was particularly grateful that my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) said firmly that in his view the Bill did not undermine the institution of marriage. I spoke about that in my opening remarks and do not wish to repeat that except to say that I am sure that my hon. Friend is right and that I have the misfortune in this regard to disagree with his close neighbour my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington who took the view that it would. I do not believe that the provisions of the Bill are significantly going to reduce the number of marriages that are contracted. However, I share his great concern that we should not, in this legislature, do anything to accelerate any moral decline that may be taking place in this country.

I hope that I have dealt with all the interesting points that have arisen except for two questions raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East. He asked about adopted children. Adopted children are treated as natural children for all purposes except in cases of succession to titles. That is the provision of the Children Act 1975. He also asked a question in connection with clause 27. That clause applies only where sperm was inseminated into the mother and it does not apply to embryo donation where fertilisation of the egg takes place in vitro.

I am sorry to have delayed the House, although I hope not unnecessarily, during my concluding speech at the end of a short Second Reading debate. I am grateful for the points that have been made and I hope that the House will see fit to accept my warm recommendation that the Bill be given a Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Minors' Contracts Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.
Order for Third Reading read.

11.27 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This short Bill has received consideration in both Houses. It gives effect to the Law Commission's report on minors' contracts. Its purpose is to amend and modernise three aspects of the law on this topic which seemed to the commission to be in need of reform. The Bill accordingly repeals two obsolete and confusing 19th century statutes; reverses the common law rule that a guarantee is unenforceable against the guarantor if the principal obligation in unenforceable on grounds of minority, and gives the courts greater power to make restitution of property acquired by a minor under an unenforceable contract.

It is enough to say that it has been generally welcomed as a useful measure of law reform which would make the law in this area more simple and more just. I commend the Bill to the House.

11.28 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Bill is to be welcomed. The aim of the Law Commission — it is the work of the Law Commission that has brought the Bill into being—was to uphold and balance two fundamental principles in this area of the law. It sought to protect the minor against his own inexperience and the exploitation of unscrupulous adults and, at the same time, to avoid causing unnecessary hardship to adults who deal fairly with minors.

Those two principles have been carried through into the Bill admirably and I particularly admire the continued application of the principle of qualified unenforceability. I am grateful to the Solicitor-General for the note and for the exploration we had in Committee of the points contained in clause 3. I am happy to see the Bill come into law.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Recognition of Trusts Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.
Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent and Prince of Wales's Consent signified.]

11.29 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This short Bill incorporates into United Kingdom law the main provisions of the convention on the law applicable to trusts and on their recognition, which was adopted in draft by the Hague conference on private international law on 20 October 1984 and which was signed on behalf of the United Kingdom on 10 January 1986. This Bill will enable the United Kingdom to ratify the convention and, by so doing, will assist the position of United Kingdom trusts with interests overseas.

The Bill has been welcomed as a valuable measure of law reform which will serve to clarify and develop the existing law of trusts. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): This Bill is also to be welcomed. As the Solicitor-General said, it is designed to implement the Hague convention, instigated by the United Kingdom relating to the law applicable to trusts and their recognition.

The Bill has a dual purpose. It enables the United Kingdom to ratify the convention, and it brings into force in the United Kingdom the main provisions of the convention. I am sure that it is right that we do that.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Reverter of Sites Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.
Order for Third Reading read—[Queen's Consent and Prince of Wales's Consent signified.]

11.30 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill is short and technical but valuable. It deals with statutes that enable land owners to donate land to be used for schools, churches and other charitable purposes, and contains provisions whereby the land will revert automatically to the owner or his successors once it is no longer used for relevant purpose. Problems have arisen both in tracing the person entitled to the land on reverter and in enabling the land to be put to proper use if the owner cannot be traced.

The Bill solves these problems by giving to those persons holding the land at the time of reverter full power to manage the land and sell it with a good title. If the true owner cannot be traced, the Bill enables the sale proceeds to be returned to charitable use.

This Bill has been widely welcomed as a useful measure of reform. I commend it to the House.

11.31 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Bill has been widely welcomed. We were able to explore a number of small, technical details in Committee, perfectly satisfactorily. The Bill arises from the work of the Law Commission, and it is right to record our gratitude and thanks to it for the work that it does.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Education Maintenance Allowances

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

11.32 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am grateful for the opportunity, even at this late hour, to raise the question of education maintenance allowance and social security disregards. Before I go into detail about the subject, I should put it into context. We are concerned with those grants that are paid to young people aged 16 to 18. The basic problem that concerns me is that far too few young people remain in education. This is particularly unfortunate when one makes comparisons with our competing countries. About 32 per cent. of our young people remain in full-time education, whereas in the United States it is 79 per cent., in the Netherlands 70 per cent., in Japan 69 per cent., in Italy 48 per cent., in Germany 44 per cent. and in France 58 per cent.

I realise that the figures look a little better if one includes those taking part-time education between the ages of 16 and 18, when the figures go up to 64 per cent., but we are still way behind countries such as Denmark, Belgium, the United States, the Netherlands, Japan and Germany with 84 per cent.

We have to consider why we do not do far better at persuading young people to remain in education. When we start to look at one or two of the more detailed figures, we can see that there is a considerable waste of resources of young people who would benefit from either full-time or part-time education, but do not do so. A letter sent to me by a physics teacher illustrates the problem. He says that he is proud of the fact that, having been appointed to the school, he has been building up physics as a popular subject.

"This year I have 15 pupils likely to get good O levels, five of them girls, and out of that group I hope that eight boys and two girls will stay on at school to take A level physics."

He goes on to ask me to imagine his horror when one of the girls announced that as soon as she had completed her O-level exams she intended to leave. He investigated the matter to see why, with her obvious ability, she wanted to leave. He discovered that, like many others in Britain today, she was the only person in the household earning any money.

"She has two younger brothers, and both her parents have been out of work for over three years. She has a part-time job working in a shoe shop on Thursdays and Fridays after school and all day Saturdays."

It seems that the shopkeeper had offered the girl a full-time job selling shoes as soon as she could leave school. The physics teacher is horrified that she should be pushed, because of financial hardship, into leaving school, rather than staying on with, he believes, a good chance of getting A-levels, including a good A-level in physics, and going on to university.

If hon. Members think I am quoting just one example, I assure them that when we look into what is happening in local education authorities throughout the country we see that a substantial number of youngsters with five or more O-levels do not remain in education. In Tameside, part of the area I represent, 23 per cent. of youngsters who get five or more O-levels do not remain in full-time education. In Trafford, it is 20 per cent., in Rotherham 22 per cent., in Dudley 20 per cent. and in Sutherland 19 per cent. In the country as a whole, 13 per cent. of youngsters with five or more O-levels do not remain in full-time education.

The figure is somewhat better in inner London, with only 9 per cent. of those with five or more O-levels leaving. In the city of Manchester it is 11 per cent. I mention those two as being better because those authorities pay education maintenance allowances. They do not pay particularly large allowances, mainly because of the way in which the allowances link up with the social security system.

Since I entered the House I have argued strongly for the introduction of education maintenance allowances as the most effective way of persuading youngsters who would benefit from continuing their education to remain. Up to 1974 I taught in a variety of secondary schools and I was always aware that some very able pupils did not remain in education because of financial pressures.

I took part in deputations to various Ministers at the Department of Education and Science between 1974 and 1979 to press for the introduction of education maintenance allowances. It is with regret that I say that the last Labour Government did not bring in a national scheme.

But while we discussed in Parliament whether a national scheme should or could be introduced, authorities such as Manchester and ILEA set up their own local schemes. The trouble was that the amount that they could pay was fixed by the inter-relationship of those sums with the social security regulations. I understand that in 1978, the amount of education maintenance allowance that could be paid before it reduced the supplementary benefit that a family received was £7·50 if a child was staying on into the sixth form and £9·50 if the child was continuing its education in an FE college.

I think the difference was designed to allow for the fact that if pupils remained in school they were in most instances entitled to free school meals, whereas if they went into FE colleges there was no provision for free school meals. There might also have been a slight difference in the amount of help available for transport to and from school. However, since 1978 no attempt has been made to uprate those allowances. The education maintenance allowance has, in practice, steadily lost its value. None of the local authorities is prepared to pay out more than the £7·50 and the £9·50, because the family would not benefit from it; it would simply be clawed back by the Department of Health and Social Security.

If those figures had been uprated in line with inflation between 1978 and now, the rate in schools would be £14·70 and the rate in FE would be £18·60. There has thus been a substantial deterioration in the assistance that can be given to young people. In 1978, if a young person left school and got a job, he would obviously be much better off; if he did not get a job, the difference between the education maintenance allowance and the social security that he would draw in his own right was fairly small. Now, the difference between the £7·50 and the £9·50 and what a young person can draw on a youth training scheme—£27 in the first year and £35 in the second—is much larger.

The Government should consider uprating the disregards. However, the position is slightly more complicated, because in 1988 a new system of social security uprating will be introduced. Why cannot the Minister uprate the social security disregards now to

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

£14·70 and £18·60, so that at least local authorities could uprate their education maintenance allowances so that they are worth in real terms the same as in 1978? If the new social security regulations are brought into effect, what will happen to education maintenance allowances?

I understand from the new housing benefit regulations, which are now in the Library, that education maintenance allowances will be disregarded in relation to those benefits from 1 April 1988. I hope that the Minister will confirm that it is intended that the social security regulations will be the same as the housing benefit regulations. It appears that, 12 months from now, there will be no limit on the level of education maintenance allowances that a local authority will be able to pay, because the entire allowance will be disregarded — as, I understand, will part-time earnings for a young person who has a paper round or works in a shop at weekends.

If I am right, and the Goverment intend to disregard entirely an income from education maintenance allowances, it seems very sad that for 12 months young people will not be able to obtain an uprated education allowance, although from April 1988 — assuming that the new legislation comes into force — they will receive a total disregard. I press the Minister at least to uprate the £7·50 and the £9·50 first introduced in 1978 to £14·70 and £18·60, as a first step. I hope that he will also take the trouble to make it clear to education authorities that, as from next April, no limit will be placed on what they can pay in education maintenance allowances, and that, during next year, some of them can take into account the change in the regulations and will be able to put forward proposals for a substantial increase in education maintenance allowances.

I should like further progress to be made and a national scheme of education maintenance allowances to be introduced in the next 12 months. They would substantially address the problem that far too few young people remain in full-time education at 16 or over. There is increasing evidence that some of those who would benefit from full-time education are being lured into youth training schemes that are of less benefit to them and to the community as a whole. I await with interest the Minister's reply.

11.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has a long-standing interest in education that is very well known to the House. Through his chairmanship of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments he will also be as aware as any hon. Member of the social security regulations that are laid before the House. It is therefore a particular pleasure that in responding tonight to his comments I am able to combine the two strands.

The hon. Gentleman began by quoting some international statistics. They are very much a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I know that the hon. Gentleman does not expect me, as a DHSS Minister, to follow him too far down that route. However, I know enough about European comparisons to realise that they can be very misleading. I think that what I have to say later will be welcome to the hon. Gentleman. But before I come to our plans for the future I should like to say a few words about the present arrangements and their background.

As the hon. Gentleman has explained, local education authorities have the power to award grants to young people who choose to remain at school or in further non-advanced education beyond the age limit for compulsory schooling. These are known as education maintenance allowances in England and Wales. In Scotland they are bursaries. Their broad purpose is to enable pupils to continue their education without causing hardship to themselves or their parents. They are related to parental income. The powers to make such allowances are discretionary. It is for each authority to decide whether and how to exercise their powers. If they decide to make an award, in England and Wales it is equally open to the local authority to decide the amount paid. In Scotland, as in many areas of our law, the arrangement is slightly different. Where the authority has decided to make an award to someone in full-time education there are fixed rates, depending on the age of the young person and whether they are at home or elsewhere.

The policy on use of the powers in the education legislation and decisions on individual cases are therefore very much a matter for the local education authority. Equally, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that ministerial responsibility for the education legislation rests with my colleagues in the Department of Education and Science. I know he will understand why I shall therefore concentrate in the remainder of my remarks on the implications of education maintenance allowances for the social security system.

The first point I wish to make is that the question of education maintenance allowances is just one small element in consideration of the overall support that is available in the income-related social security benefits for those with children continuing at school beyond the compulsory school leaving age.

People on supplementary benefit with children staying on at school receive an amount for the living expenses of the young person. This is currently £18·75 for someone aged 16 or 17. The amount is the same as an unemployed young person of the same age living in his parents' household would get. So the same direct financial support is available to the low income family overall, whether or not the child remains at school. The value of these scale rates has increased by some 6 per cent. since we took office. Such families can also receive help with their rent and rates — automatically if the parent is on supplementary benefit. For other people on low incomes, including those in work, the system of needs allowances, which determine how much housing help is paid, takes account of the fact that the claimant is supporting a young person continuing at school. Finally, family income supplement is also available to people on low income in work, with children. Again how the amount paid is worked out would take account of the fact that the young person was continuing at school. There is, therefore, an extensive system of direct financial help to low income families which takes account of the needs of the young person continuing at school after 16.

It has been a longstanding principle of the social security system that there should not be double provision from public funds for the living expenses of its claimants and other members of their families. That is why benefits such as child benefit are taken into account. There are also

problems of equity if people assessed as having the same level of needs can in practice have fairly different levels of income depending on whether some have other forms of income and what the source of that income is.

If that were taken to its logical conclusion there would be no disregards of other income. Successive Governments have, however, recognised that there are good reasons for limited disregards in particular circumstances. As a result education maintenance allowances have received special treatment. The present position is that, for children at school, we ignore the first £7·50 per week when calculating the family's benefit entitlement. For young people in other further non-advanced education it is £9·50 per week; the difference relates to the fact that people at school can as the hon. Gentleman surmised get free school meals during term time. The case for this special disregard has broadly been to cover extra needs connected with education, as the supplementary benefits scale rates themselves already cover normal living expenses.

It is true that there have been no increases in these disregards since they were set in 1978. But that is not unique to this particular form of income. For example, the general disregard of part-time earnings for most claimants has remained at the same level for some years. No Government have made a practice of automatic or regular uprating of disregards. This to some extent reflects the difficult issues of principle in allowing disregards within income-related schemes. Generally, I think it fair to say that Governments have given greater priority to the level of support available to all claimants in similar circumstances, rather than specific concessions which can benefit only a minority of them.

We have, however, taken a fresh look at the question of the treatment of education maintenance allowances in the context of our wider social security reforms. One of the main objectives of our proposals — and one that has been widely welcomed — is to put the rules for the income-related benefits on as common a basis as possible. We have, therefore, reviewed carefully the way in which claimants' resources are treated in the three present schemes to see how they can best be brought together.

At present there are different rules in housing benefit and family income supplement from those in the supplementary benefit scheme. In housing benefit and FIS now no account is taken of education maintenance allowances received by the parents.

For the future, we have concluded that no account will be taken of education maintenance allowances and their Scottish equivalents in any of the three reformed income-related benefits—supplementary benefit, housing benefit, and family credit. This will apply from April 1988 when the wider changes take place. This will give local education authorities a further, useful, measure of flexibility in deciding how they use the powers under the education legislation where they wish to help encourage young people in families of modest incomes to stay at school.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I am sure that everyone outside who reads this report of our proceedings will welcome the flexibility that is being offered to local authorities to put up the education maintenance allowance. But would it not be logical to increase the disregards as from next September so that local authorities could pay education maintenance allowances effectively at a higher rate for the whole of next year rather than being able to start paying the higher rate only from 1 April?

Mr. Lyell: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says. I am glad that he welcomes this significant improvement as from April 1988. He argued persuasively, though not persuasively enough for the Labour Government to make significant improvements. I do not think logic assists him. I think that we are doing the logical thing, which is to make the change at the time when we are making substantial changes, improvements and simplifications in the social security system as from April 1988.

Returning to the point as to the increased flexibility which this will give local authorities, I would expect them to take account of the fact that direct financial help may also be available from the social security system in relevant cases. I am sure they would wish to avoid creating, through their actions, their own inequities in the position of young people in families with similar incomes staying on at school.

I must also make the point that we have been able to take this step in the context of the present education maintenance allowance system designed to provide a further encouragement of education opportunities and thus directed primarily at education needs. The circumstances would have been rather different if the education maintenance allowance system had been a significant alternative system for meeting the living needs of young people. If that had been the case, I think we could not have offered the improvement in the rules that we are now proposing. Equally if the education maintenance allowance system were ever to develop in such a way that it became, in effect, a routine and overlapping form of support for living expenses, we would have to look again at the question of its treatment in the social security system.

I am, however, very pleased to say that we have been able to plan this worthwhile improvement in the rules. They will give local education authorities greater flexibility in how they use their powers. The charges provide a useful simplification in the treatment of resources which can be seen as a complicated part of the social security system, and it is part of our general objective of bringing the rules for the various income-related schemes closer together and making them easier to understand. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for enabling me to put this improvement on the record before the House, even at this late hour. I hope he will welcome, as I know that he does, the response that we have been able to make to the concern expressed on this issue over a number of years.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 8 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

The VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:

I have received your Address praying that the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 (Amdt of Schedule) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before your House.

I will comply with your request.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Leith Hospital

1. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the future of Leith hospital; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): Mr. Speaker, may I first explain to the House the absence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland? He has a possible fracture to his left ankle and has been advised to move around as little as possible this week.

My right hon. and learned Friend has received 24 letters, mainly from members of the public, since the announcement last September that all but out-patient services would be withdrawn from Leith hospital.

Mr. Brown: As the National Health Service is supposed to be safe in the Government's hands, surely it is reasonable to expect a replacement hospital to be built before the present one is demolished. Will the Minister meet members of the local community, myself and other interested hon. Members to discuss this matter, bearing in mind that much fresh information has come to hand in recent weeks? Will he do that, or are we to be snubbed yet again by Lord Glenarthur—a situation that has been developing since the Minister with responsibility for health in Scotland took over?

Mr. MacKay: I understand that the board plans to build a new hospital for the elderly in Leith. However, I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that there are new and expanding facilities all over Edinburgh, including, for example, the new development of 144 beds and supporting services at the Western general hospital in Edinburgh, which will be opened later this year for the benefit of all patients in Edinburgh, including those in Leith.

Mr. Eadie: The Leith hospital should come under the ambit of the Lothian health board, but how can we have any confidence in that health board when we know, from recent appointments made to the health board by the Secretary of State, that people on that board with Labour sympathies were dismissed? Is the Minister aware that what happened in Midlothian is a perfect disgrace, because two members with Labour sympathies were dismissed and replaced by one Tory placeman?

Mr. MacKay: There is always a change of members of health boards. Some members serve a term, two terms, or sometimes more, and they are replaced by other members. We look, not to political affiliation, but to achieving a balanced representation on the health board that will run efficient health services. I would have thought that the Labour party would be interested in that aspect, and not in trying to make political points about appointments.

Cunninghame

2. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to pay an official visit to Cunninghame district.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): My right hon. and learned Friend had planned to visit Irvine earlier this week but was unable to do so. He has no other plans to pay an official visit to the area in the near future.

Mr. Lambie: I should like to send my best wishes to the Secretary of State and hope that he will be back and fighting fit once again.

The Secretary of State was due to plant a tree in my constituency on Monday. When I heard that he would not be available to do that, I took my own spade, but unfortunately I was not asked to do it, and the Minister with responsibility for health was brought in to do it instead.

Is the Minister aware that, in spite of the announcement by Caledonian Paper to come to Irvine and an article this week in the *Daily Telegraph* that Irvine new town is now a prosperous place, there is still a hard core of 12,000 unemployed people in the Cunninghame area? Is he further aware that there is not only that hard core, but that one man in every three is unemployed? Will the Minister ask the Secretary of State to accept the invitation of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) and me to come to Irvine and meet the economic committee of Cunninghame district council to discuss the Cunninghame unemployment initiative which is aimed at reducing unemployment and helping everyone in the area?

Mr. Ancram: I shall certainly pass on to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State the hon. Gentleman's good wishes, for which he will be grateful.

Although I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman must be feeling twitchy after this morning's opinion poll in the *Glasgow Herald* and may feel that it is time to start electioneering, it is surprising that he should raise this particular topic in the week when Caledonian Paper has begun to move towards setting up a paper mill in the new town of Irvine, which will create jobs for 1,000 workers during the two years of construction and 480 permanent jobs once the plant becomes fully operational in 1991. I hope that on reflection the hon. Gentleman will welcome that and see it as a sign of the improving economic position in Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: The Labour candidate for Cunninghame, South has less reason to be twitchy because of the opinion

poll than has the Tory candidate for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram). May I ask that Tory candidate if he will guarantee——

Mr. Henderson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. My knowledge of Scotland is not all that great, but I hope that this will be about Cunninghame district.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister guarantee that if the Secretary of State pays an official visit to Cunninghame district it will be more successful than his recent visit to Cumnock and Doon Valley district, which neighbours Cunninghame, where unemployment is now the highest not only in Scotland but in the whole country? Will the Government at last recognise that the main centres of unemployment are not only the inner cities, and that the worst centre is the rural area of Cumnock and Doon Valley? Is he aware that the present proposals of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), who is now whispering in his ear, to help unemployment in Cumnock and Doon Valley are insufficient and that we need a major initiative to tackle the problem?

Mr. Ancram: I shall answer rather briefly that fairly lengthy question. My right hon. and learned Friend's visits are always successful. It is not for me to comment on the success of local Members of Parliament.

YTS

3. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which organisations in Dundee have been given approved training organisation status for the new two-year YTS.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): At 27 March 1987 six organisations in Dundee had been given approved training organisation status for YTS: full status went to Dundee college of technology, Tayside Road Transport Group Training Association and Dundee football club; and provisional status to Dundee and Tayside chamber of commerce, Henry Boot Ltd. and Tayside regional council.

Mr. Ross: Has the Minister had a chance to study in more detail our correspondence over one particular organisation? Can he give me an assurance that we shall have a decision shortly that that organisation will not be given approved training organisation status for the new two-year YTS in Dundee?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to LINK, his complaints have been investigated and, to the extent that they were justified, have been remedied to the satisfaction of the MSC. Naturally, that organisation will continue to monitor progress.

Mr. Henderson: Will my hon. Friend congratulate Dundee and Tayside chamber of commerce on the important role that it has played in youth training, not least in the commercial sector and, indeed, in north-east Fife, where it has been able to show that 100 per cent. of young people who finish a youth training scheme with it end up with a permanent job? Will he also carry the congratulations of the House to the Manpower Services Commission for the effective way in which it has ensured that no person under 18 years of age need lack a job?

Mr. Lang: That is a remarkable achievement, and I should like to take this opportunity to offer it my congratulations. The MSC is becoming increasingly proficient in an increasingly effective and useful scheme which offers great promise for young people of a better chance of a job afterwards.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Minister aware that young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are on the job training scheme are effectively being disbarred from entry into community projects? Does he intend to do anything about that?

Mr. Lang: It would be rather difficult for them to be on the community programme and JTS. Dundee has done very well out of the MSC schemes. Not only has JTS been pioneered there, but job club and restart have been pioneered there, as have a number of other useful schemes that are of great value to the city.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend confirm that under the new two-year YTS scheme Dundee United football club is not one of the approved bodies, but that it is probably the best trained and most efficient of all the football clubs in the United Kingdom and we should congratulate it on its appearance this evening in the semi-final of the UEFA cup?

Mr. Lang: These are controversial matters, but I certainly wish the club luck.

NFU Scotland

5. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend and I attended the union's annual dinner on 12 March, when a wide range of agricultural topics were discussed. I addressed the annual general meeting the following day.

Mr. Wallace: I thank the Minister for meeting a delegation of my hon. Friends and myself this morning to discuss the beef crisis in Scotland. Will he assure us again that he appreciates the seriousness of the crisis in the beef industry? We are looking for an early announcement of any increase that he could make in headage payments and of a devaluation of the green pound. I appreciate that these important matters will be discussed at the Council of Ministers' meeting at the end of the month, but, given the importance of this to the Scottish agriculture industry, will he confirm that either he or his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will attend that meeting?

Mr. MacKay: At the moment there are no plans for my right hon. and learned Friend or me to attend the meeting at the end of the month, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman, as I did this morning, that the Government are well aware of the strong feelings in the industry on beef in particular. I am well aware of the importance of beef to the Scottish farming industry. The CAP price fixing negotiations and proposals to reform the agri-monetary system are a major element of the Commission's proposals, and we shall try to ensure that an even-handed balance is achieved between our producers and producers in other member states.

Mr. Fairbairn: As a matter of Government policy, will my hon. Friend seek the fulfilment of the reasonable,

restrained and sensible suggestions that the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland, Ian Grant, made in his annual speech? His suggestions were reasoned and sensible. Will the Government give them their blessing?

Mr. MacKay: I am happy to echo my hon. and learned Friend's tribute to Ian Grant, the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland. We have had many discussions, and I am well aware of the view of the industry as seen from NFU headquarters and by farmers. The current Commission package is a tough one. We must take some difficult decisions against a background of soaring surpluses in many of the major commodities. I can assure my hon. and learned Friend that I and my colleagues from other agricultural departments will be ensuring at the Council of Ministers' meeting and other meetings in Brussels that we safeguard the position of agriculture in this country.

Mr. Buchan: When the Minister next meets the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland, will he ask him, if he did not ask him last time, what his views are on the proposals of the British Commissioner, Lord Cockfield — aided and buttressed by that deplorable organisation, the EEC—on the introduction of VAT on food and what the position of the Scottish farmers will be in relation to that? Will the Minister assure us that his Department and the Scottish Office in general will resist such a deplorable tax on food costs, which would be the most monstrous thing to happen to food prices since the corn laws?

Mr. MacKay: I understand the hon. Gentleman's close appreciation and the way in which he follows the doings of the EC, and possibly also of the European Assembly, but Ian Grant has not discussed those matters with me and I do not believe that they are serious propositions.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am sure that the House and Scottish farmers in general will view with concern the fact that neither my hon. Friend nor my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is geared to go to the discussions in Brussels. I sincerely hope that, in view of the crisis in relation to beef, cereals and the devaluation of the green pound, my hon. Friend or my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will take immediate steps to ensure that they go to Brussels to fight their corner for the Scottish farmers.

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend puts a great temptation before me to spend many days and nights in Brussels, as I have done on Fisheries Council matters. I have had no indications from the NFU of Scotland or the industry in general that they wish the negotiations in Brussels to be conducted other than on behalf of the United Kingdom by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Dewar: If the hon. Gentleman meets the president of the NFU of Scotland, will he take his opinion on the Minister's rather surprising policy declaration the other day, to the effect that any rural school with fewer than three teachers was educationally damaging and should perhaps be phased out?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not represent a rural constituency and does not understand what farming is about. Next time I meet Ian Grant I might be tempted to ask him what damaging impact the Labour party's proposals to rate agricultural land would have on agriculture.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Did my hon. Friend discuss with the president of the NFU the serious impact on the beef market of the imports of Irish beef? Why does Irish beef continue to enjoy the benefit of our variable beef premium scheme as well as the advantages that accrue to Irish farmers at home?

Mr. MacKay: I understand and sympathise with the feelings of many Scottish beef farmers about the Irish situation, but that is a long-standing arrangement that was negotiated at the time of our entry, along with the Irish Republic, to the EC, which made it clear that the farmers in the Republic would have access to our markets and to the variable beef premium scheme. That is why it has come about.

Caterpillar Tractors Ltd.

6. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further meetings he has had with representatives of Caterpillar about the future of its Glasgow plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Our main objective is urgently to explore possibilities for retaining manufacturing operations and employment at Tannochside. In this connection officials of the Industry Department for Scotland are in regular contact with Caterpillar management.

Mr. Strang: Will the Minister now accept that the people of Scotland want action, not just words, from the Government to secure an industrial future for the Caterpillar work force? Will the Government now take the plant and equipment into public ownership, either directly by nationalisation or through the Scottish Development Agency? Having done that, will the hon. Gentleman accept that he may well be in a position to negotiate constructively with Caterpillar about a future for that plant, perhaps supplying spare parts to the Caterpillar operation? If that fails, at least the equipment will be there to be used by other industrialists for the benefit of the Scottish people. It would be outrageous if that equipment, much of which has been substantially paid for by the taxpayer, were allowed to be moved out of the country.

Mr. Lang: I share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety to secure a future for the plant, but nationalisation has never solved any industrial problem in the past and I cannot see it as being appropriate in this situation either. However, I should like us to be able to gain access to the plant in order to help complete the profile that the Scottish Office is compiling through the SDA and Industry Department so that we can try to market the facility on a worldwide basis.

Mr. Hirst: When my hon. Friend or his officials next meet the management of Caterpillar, will he tell it that Scotland expects it to co-operate in any way possible in order to find a way to maintain manufacturing operations and employment at Uddingston? Will he tell the management firmly that it is simply not acceptable that it should try to cast the plant, its work force and the community aside like a soiled rag?

Mr. Lang: I share my hon. Friend's views about the way in which the Caterpillar management has handled the

matter from the outset. However, I am also anxious to secure the future of the suppliers, and I am glad to know that the management is keen to help maintain the suppliers' relationship with Caterpillar in supplying Caterpillar factories elsewhere.

Mr. James Hamilton: The Minister is aware that Caterpillar is in my constituency and that some of my parliamentary colleagues and I have met him on several occasions concerning this closure. Will the Minister now take on board the suggestion that he should attempt some initiative to try to get the management, preferably at American level, to meet the shop stewards at the factory — despite the fact that they are sitting in — to try to resolve this pernicious problem? I am sure the Minister is aware that if he does not do that, unemployment—now 20·5 per cent. in the Motherwell district — will be tremendously increased. On that basis, the closure of the factory will be a tragedy for the area.

Mr. Lang: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's close interests over a long period of time in the Caterpillar plant in his constituency. The hon. Gentleman may like to know that ACAS has approached the unions on this matter and they have agreed to attend a meeting. Caterpillar management has also been approached and it is considering the matter.

Mr. Dewar: I know the Minister recognises—it has been illustrated in today's exchanges — that there is a sense of anger and outrage at the way in which the Caterpillar company has treated the work force at Tannochside. That work force has served the company loyally for many years. I believe that the House will be extremely pleased to hear that there is a possibility of mediation through ACAS. Will the Minister join me in urging the management to follow the example of the unions, to agree to that meeting, and to get talks started now? Such talks might remove some of the immediate difficulties about the position at the plant.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is aware that my right hon. and learned Friend and I share his feeling of outrage at the way in which the whole business of the closure of the Caterpillar plant has been handled. I am anxious to see mediation succeed and I hope that the initiative now in train will achieve that end.

Rates

7. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about regional council rates increases in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I have received numerous representations about the large rates increases made by many Scottish authorities. These increases are particularly disappointing since the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88 is a generous one.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as he has said, in the year in which the most generous rate support grant settlement for years has been given, it is nothing short of scandalous that Strathclyde regional council should be passing on a 19 per cent. rate increase to ratepayers? Does my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues have any plans to protect Scottish ratepayers from rate increases many times the rate of inflation?

Mr. Ancram: Obviously we will wish to consider the budgets of all authorities to see whether action is required. It is disappointing to have a rate increase of 18·5 per cent. in Strathclyde, especially as that authority, if it had spent at guideline for the year just ended and budgeted within the guideline for this year, could have achieved a 5 per cent. decrease in its rates. It only goes to show, as we have always said, that voting Labour means higher taxes, whether local or national.

Mr. Maxton: Is it not already clear from an earlier answer that the Minister's statistics are suspect, as he appears to believe that 42 per cent. recorded for the Labour party in an opinion poll is far worse that the 18 per cent. recorded for the Tory party? That is a remarkable fact. Certain Conservative Members are not twitching about the general election, because they are already politically dead.

Every regional council has increased its rates, with the exception of Grampian, by more than 10 per cent. That includes Highland, Borders and Dumfries and Galloway, which are not Labour-controlled. Strathclyde region had a 2 per cent. increase in its rate support grant—not a generous one, but well below the rate of inflation — while Lothian region had a nil increase in its rate support grant — again, not a generous one. The Minister's argument about a generous rate support grant is a load of nonsense.

Mr. Ancram: If the hon. Gentleman is satisfied with one sixth of the Labour party's support disappearing within a month, that is a matter for him.

The hon. Gentleman has argued constantly that if the proportion of rate support grant is held we can expect to see low rate increases. The proportion of rate support grant was held in Scotland this year and the average of rate increases is 15·1 per cent. If that does nothing else, it gives the lie to the argument that has been put forward by the hon. Gentleman.

Scotch Whisky Association

8. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scotch Whisky Association; what subjects were discussed and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the association's public affairs committee last November. Among the issues discussed were taxation policy as it relates to spirits and the problems encountered in exporting whisky to Japan.

Mr. Pollock: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is still considerable concern within the association on this vexed question of the tax and duty treatment of Scotch whisky imports by Japan? Will he undertake to keep a close interest on behalf of the Scottish Office in the progress of the GATT case against Japan? If no satisfactory progress is forthcoming in the foreseeable future, will he consider it for possible inclusion on the agenda of the Heads of Government summit later this year?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion, which I am sure will certainly be considered. I pay tribute to his close interest in this matter, which is so important in his constituency. I also congratulate him on his recent initiative with the Japanese ambassador. As he knows, the Government and the European Commission

are taking action under article 23 of the GATT to seek the rapid removal of discriminatory barriers. We hope that this will be successful in the case of Japan.

Mr. O'Neill: When the Minister next meets the Scottish Whisky Association, will he remember that the DCL-Guinness organisation is the largest single member of it? Therefore, will he ensure that stability in that firm is sustained and that it will not be at the expense of the possibility of introducing bulk export of malt whisky, which would endanger the long-term future of whisky, the bottle-making industry and the packaging industry, with which the whisky industry is so closely aligned?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government are restrained on these matters anyway by the GATT and by European Community commitments. We certainly maintain contact with Guinness.

Sir Alex Fletcher: Has the Scotch Whisky Association made any representations to my hon. Friend about the severe disadvantages suffered by the industry due to the fact that it is now controlled from London by an Irish brewery conglomerate whose only genius was to acquire these brands by deception?

Mr. Lang: Despite the problems to which my hon. Friend refers, total exports have now exceeded £1 billion. I hope that my hon. Friend is pleased at the transfer of Distillers home trade operations to Perth from the south of England.

Industrial Construction and Production

9. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the index of industrial production and construction in Scotland in the fourth quarter of 1986.

Mr. Lang: Estimates for the fourth quarter of 1986 are not yet available. In the third quarter the index of industrial production and construction, excluding oil and gas, rose by 2·4 per cent. in Scotland, compared with a 1 per cent. rise in the United Kingdom overall.

Mr. Hogg: Is it not the case that the figures for the whole of the past seven years show that the level of output in Scotland is running below that which the Government inherited from the last Labour Government? Is it not further the case that the Government are cutting by £100 million the Scottish Office budget? How can that assist in increasing output in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am not sure to which part of the Scottish Office budget the hon. Gentleman refers. Certainly it is the case that output in the last few years has been below the level of 1979. However, it is now very close to that and is being achieved with substantially fewer workers.

Mr. Hogg: That is an achievement?

Mr. Lang: It is an achievement in increasing productivity, which is the most secure guarantee of future employment.

Mr. Henderson: Has my hon. Friend noticed how the Opposition used to talk about the non-oil economy and are now less inclined to do so? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the improvements in productivity and efficiency in the non-oil sector of Scottish industry have resulted in substantial increases in employment?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Manufacturing productivity in Scotland generally has been increasing by about 6 per cent. over the years 1979 to 1985. Over the same time productivity in England was increasing by only about 4 per cent.

Mr. Kennedy: Did the Minister see the report in *The Independent* this week, which showed that out of all the constituencies in Britain the Ross, Cromarty and Skye constituency had the highest percentage increase in long-term unemployment — over 64 per cent? In terms of industrial production and construction—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Labour Members do not seem to be interested in unemployment in the Highlands of Scotland. Will the Minister look again at the regional aid map? If he does that he will see that the Government reduced substantially the incentives and the assisted area status that had been available to parts of my constituency to attract industry and create jobs.

Mr. Lang: The significance of the percentage increase to which the hon. Gentleman refers is dependent on the base from which it started. On regional aid, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, about 65 per cent. of the working population in Scotland are now in assisted areas, compared with only 35 per cent. in the United Kingdom. That represents about £62 per head, compared with £19 in the United Kingdom. The substantial increase in the coverage of regional aid as a proportion of the total since 1979 is from about 21 to 30 per cent., which reflects the importance that is attached to that matter in Scotland.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend use his influence to ensure—as Scotch whisky is one of the most successful industries in Scotland—that the Japanese——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this come under the heading of industrial production?

Mr. Fairbairn: It does indeed. Will he ensure that our nips are available to their Nips at the same price as their nips are available to their Nips?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend puts his question in his own inimitable way. He might have asked me about the electronics industry. A recent survey showed that, because of that important industry, about 3,700 American jobs are coming to Scotland — unless a Labour Government are returned.

Mr. Dewar: I thought that that was a splendid example of the Minister's logical thought processes. Why does he maintain the charade of a successful index of industrial productivity when between the third quarter of 1979 and the third quarter of 1986 it has dropped by 5·8 per cent.? Why does he not address himself to the fair point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg)? Does the Minister not accept that, taking this year against next year, there is a cut in the industry and economy budget of the Scottish Office from £344 million to £257 million? Does he defend that cut, and does it give him satisfaction?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the RDGI scheme is about to end. Secondly, regional development grant is demand-led and cannot therefore be specifically cash-tagged in the way that he has suggested. Our budget has had to be increased by 26 per cent. from what we had anticipated a year ago, because of increased activity.

Aberdeen University

10. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will have discussions with the University Grants Committee regarding the financial situation and the future of Aberdeen university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but the allocation of grants to individual universities is a matter for the University Grants Committee.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am sorry that my hon. Friend does not remember what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said last week about a new committee to run the universities. Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a grave crisis in Aberdeen university due to underfunding by the UGC? This is leading to the loss of viability of a considerable number of specialised research units in the Grampian region. Will my hon. Friend take steps to do something about the funding of Aberdeen university, so that it does not have to close down before its 500th birthday?

Mr. MacKay: The principle of the funding of individual institutions is a matter for the UGC, and the UFC after it, and that is not in doubt. We have recently endorsed it in our White Paper.

In the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of United Kingdom universities in September last year, he gave an assurance that the Government would not consider any proposals for the closure of a university.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister accept that there are two problems that affect Scottish universities in general, and Aberdeen in particular? The first is that the University Grants Committee has had its funding effectively cut—particularly in view of the settlement for university teachers. Secondly, for the second time in only five years, Aberdeen university has been singled out for a depth of cut that makes it virtually impossible for the university to maintain a breadth of departments and future viability. Will the Minister intercede to ensure that the university is not victimised yet again?

Mr. MacKay: The decisions of the University Grants Committee are made on the basis of issues such as peer group review and an examination of the merits and strengths of each university. The recurrent grant is distributed at different rates to different universities. On the hon. Gentleman's point about the total amount of money for universities, of course the Government have attempted to control and constrain public expenditure. This has played the important role in the fact that productivity is up, inflation is down and tax rates are being reduced. Now, unemployment rates are falling, too. The universities have to play their part in restraining that public expenditure.

Sir Alex Fletcher: Would it not be more helpful to the University of Aberdeen, in assisting it to become more viable, if Ministers and academics were to support the principal in his efforts to reorganise the university and make it more suitable for the training and education of graduates, who would then have a ready place on the market? Should not that training be done more efficiently and within a shorter time?

Mr. MacKay: It is important that Aberdeen university should plan properly for its future. The proposals that my hon. Friend mentioned must be considered by the university, and by the UGC if the university puts them forward. That would not be a matter for Ministers. I should have thought that all sorts of proposals, radical and otherwise, are meat and drink to universities.

Mr. Dewar: I congratulate the Minister on the fact that he is answering this question and has not transferred it to the Department of Education and Science. All Labour Members appreciate this opportunity to discuss the problems of the University of Aberdeen. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is odd that he is answering this question when, only last week, the Government rejected the STEAC recommendations and refused to accept that the Scottish Office should have a say in the funding of Scottish universities?

Mr. MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced that he would play a part with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science in giving guidance to the UFC on universities in Scotland and on institutions in the non-university sector. Before the Opposition, as usual, attempt to portray some part of Scotland as totally negative, I remind them that in the higher education sector—it is the same in all sectors—there are 10,000 more students in place than there were under the last Labour Government.

Emigration

11. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline those Government economic policies which are designed to stem the loss of population in Scotland through external migration.

Mr. Lang: The Government have in place a wide range of economic policies designed to reduce inflation and maintain a vigorous, enterprising economy — *[Interruption.]*—which offers the best hope of reducing migration from Scotland.

Mr. Wilson: I had some difficulty in hearing that answer, but I suspect that it was not worth very much.

Does the Minister accept the predictions of the Registrar General for Scotland that over the next 50 years the Scottish population will decrease by about half a million, or 10 per cent., because of adverse economic trends? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is the disastrous result of English government over the years and that Scotland desperately needs new economic policies and a new Government of her own to secure a future for our people?

Mr. Lang: I would hesitate to lend support to a prediction that goes over the next 50 years. I suspect that over the past year migration has probably been related more to the decline in the oil industry. I hope that the irony of that fact is not lost on the hon. Gentleman or his party.

Dr. Godman: The communities of Greenock and Port Glasgow are suffering from this external migration. Will the Scottish Office now advise the SDA to increase the funding and staffing of the Inverclyde initiative to stem that migration?

Mr. Lang: I am keen to see the Inverclyde initiative proceed. I am glad that it has managed to secure some land

in that area. Since 1979 overseas migration has been lower than under the previous Government and, over the past three years, considerably lower.

Mr. Pollock: How do the figures for external migration compare with those in the Republic of Ireland, which follows a different set of economic policies? Does my hon. Friend agree that the right kind of policy is to build on the success of the Highlands and Islands Development Board, which, for the first time in more than a century, has secured a stemming of the tide of emigration from at least that part of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The Highlands and rural areas generally are doing well in terms of population trends. To some extent this is a result of the activities of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the SDA, whose role and budget we have expanded. As for migration within the United Kingdom, I suppose that there might be a possibility of Scots leaving Scotland in the face of Labour's tax-raising assembly, but then they would be driven out of the United Kingdom by the Labour party's United Kingdom tax policies.

Unemployment

12. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 30 January to discuss a wide range of economic issues, including unemployment. I hope to meet representatives of the STUC tomorrow to discuss Caterpillar.

Mr. Eadie: While I welcome the Minister's answer, may I ask him whether he is aware that unemployment is one of the major issues affecting Scotland? In my own constituency of Midlothian unemployment has increased relentlessly since the Government came to office. Does the Minister agree with the statement by the Pope this week that unemployment is evidence of moral disorder?

Mr. Lang: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the rise in unemployment. However, I hope that he, like me, draws comfort from the fact that unemployment fell by about 8,000 in Scotland last month. That is the largest monthly fall for nine years, and if we persist in our economic policies we can look forward to continued falls in the future.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend meets the Scottish Trades Union Congress, will he discuss with its members the real danger of unemployment among the beef stockmen in the specialist beef sector? Unless action is taken as a matter of urgency to give a fair opportunity to the beef producers of Scotland, we shall see substantial unemployment and a repetition of the Highland clearances.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend who is responsible for those matters will have heard what my hon. Friend said. Certainly we are very keen to see employment maintained in rural areas.

Sir Russell Johnston: When the Minister meets the STUC about Caterpillar, will he have some specific proposals to put before it? Unless the Minister gives some evidence that the Government are prepared to act directly to save 2 per cent. of Scotland's manufacturing capacity, all the talk about wishing unemployment to drop will be seen as simply pious nonsense.

Mr. Lang: The meeting is at the request of the STUC. However, I shall take the opportunity to point out that as soon as the sit-in ends and we are able to gain access to the plant, with the Caterpillar management, and complete the profile, we shall be in a better position to try to market the facility around the world and thus to secure employment at the plant.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Will the Minister confirm that one of the ways in which the Government are trying to reduce unemployment is by encouraging health boards to use YTS youths in the hospitals and paying them £27·50 a week, instead of employing further, although cheap, nursing labour? Is he aware that five health boards in Scotland already employ 300 of those youngsters at pittance wages? This is no excuse for treating nurses as scandalously as the present Government are doing.

Mr. Lang: I have no responsibility for health matters. However, the hon. Gentleman will know as well as I do of the substantial expansion in the nursing population in Scotland. I hope that he, like me, welcomes the opportunity that young people are given by YTS to secure training and work experience and obtain a vocational qualification, and thus a better chance of finding a job after the training is completed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When my hon. Friend next meets the STUC, will he ask why it supports the introduction of a minimum wage, the abolition of the civil nuclear power programme, the cancellation of Trident and the rating of agricultural land and buildings in line with the Labour party, when that policy will result in 100,000 jobs being lost in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend has hit four nails very firmly on the head. He is absolutely right. Almost every one of the Opposition's policies, when carefully analysed, would lead us to a drop rather than an increase in unemployment.

Renfrew District Council

13. **Mr. Buchan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet representatives of Renfrew district council to discuss its recent economic initiative.

Mr. Lang: I met representatives of Renfrew district council on 23 January to discuss proposals for a local economic initiative, and wrote to the council on 10 March with my conclusions. I have received an encouraging response and hope that an agreement can be reached on the present proposals as soon as practicable.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister accept that, rather than an encouraging response in words, we should like some cash to fulfil the pledge that the Government gave at the time of the closure of the Linwood factory? Does he realise that the cost in public expenditure of the unemployment in Renfrew district is well over £100 million, and that that will apply to the projects under the economic initiative scheme? Putting that into public investment could wipe out entirely the unemployment facing my constituency of Paisley, South.

Mr. Lang: The SDA has agreed to meet half the initiative's operating costs and to second staff to it. It has

also committed itself to £4 million of environmental improvements. In addition, Renfrew council's current expenditure guideline this year is 7·7 per cent. above assessed need, and 4·2 per cent. above last year in terms of the inflationary increase. In addition, the SDA's LEGUP scheme has approved projects in Renfrew worth £270,000. So a substantial amount of cash is available from a number of different sources.

Mrs. McCurley: Will my hon. Friend explain to Renfrew district council that any sound, concrete proposal that it puts forward for economic regeneration in Renfrewshire will be greeted favourably by the Government and that the finances will be looked into? Until it comes up with the goods, we in this place cannot come up with the goods. Will he confirm that the phoney unemployment statistics that it tries to foist upon us are completely unacceptable and are no substitute for good ideas for the area?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The most successful outcome of the initiative can be achieved by the co-operation of the district council and the Scottish Development Agency. I earnestly hope that that is now being achieved. I hope also that the arrival of Compaq in the district will enhance the employment prospects and the fact that the Sizewell order is going ahead will be of advantage to Babcock.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Child and Sexual Abuse

36. **Dr. Godman** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions for offences involving child abuse and sexual abuse have been mounted in *(a)* sheriff's courts and *(b)* the High Court in each of the past four years.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): These statistics are not centrally kept and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Godman: Those who are professionally involved with the treatment of child abuse and sexual abuse cases are concerned about the selection and training of sheriffs for children's panel proof hearings. Do the Government have plans to designate a small number of sheriffs to deal with such cases, as happens with adoption cases?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: That matter has not been considered. However, because of his earlier interest in child appearances in court the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there is a Scottish Office project under way, entitled "The Child Witness". Research is continuing. That will probably cover the sort of point about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that in cases of child abuse, in particular child sexual abuse, it is important to remember that it is the child who matters and that in the courts, and in every other way, we should make it possible for a child to give evidence in a manner that does not in any way disadvantage the child?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes. I think that all hon. Members appreciate that we should make every effort to ensure that the trauma that a child has experienced is not continued or revived through the consequence of a court appearance. Nevertheless, there is the conflicting requirement that those who are accused of serious crimes —and they will be serious crimes if they involve assaults on children—are entitled to a fair trial. For that reason, as part of its review of the law of evidence the Scottish Law Commission is considering how evidence might be taken from children in circumstances that would in some way or another alleviate that trauma. In the meantime, everything is being done to keep to a minimum the problems for a child who has to appear in court.

Sir Russell Johnston: Nevertheless, the Solicitor-General must be aware that there is increasing concern among social workers in Scotland about the fact that neither the Crown nor the courts are handling cases of child abuse adequately or effectively. As for the matter that he raised — by which the hon. and learned Gentleman presumably means video evidence being given in court—does he not agree that the intense trauma of direct confrontation between the child and the molester must urgently be stopped? Furthermore, is not spouse corroboration a very considerable problem? I have in my hand a letter from a social worker who says:

"I am engaged in one such case at the moment, where the word of a four year old girl means nothing in terms of evidence, despite its detail."

The social worker goes on to say that that girl will end up in a foster home. She also asks whether, as the girl grows up, she will wonder why she was fostered while her father remained at home, and she says that she will ask whether that was just.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I readily understand why the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the position of children in court, but he has to face the fact that there is a serious dilemma. Those who appear before our courts are entitled to a fair trial. If they are convicted of the sexual assault of a child, that is a crime that we all take seriously and the courts are likely to impose a heavy penalty upon them. In those circumstances, we have to try to maintain a balance. We have to try to avoid trauma for the child, but at the same time we must try to ensure that the accused is able to present his case properly. I have already said that, in an effort to resolve these difficulties, the Scottish Law Commission is examining the matter. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the position is already in hand south of the border.

Co-Star Ltd.

37. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if the procurator fiscal in Kilmarnock has yet reached a decision in connection with the case of Co-Star Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The procurator fiscal has not received any report on this matter.

Mr. Lambie: Why is it that Americans can come to this country, set up companies, rob the regional aid system by illegal actions, make a lot of money and still escape prosecution?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I think the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the acquiring of regional aid is essentially a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, if the hon. Gentleman has any evidence that there has been fraud or other illegality, and if he will provide that evidence, naturally it will be looked at, not only by the

police, but by the procurator fiscal. All I should say in relation to the matter he has raised is that certain inquiries are still continuing.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that the secretary and legal adviser to Co-Star was Mr. Graeme Adam, about whom a large number of complaints have already been submitted to the Law Society of Scotland and about whom I have written to the Solicitor-General on a specific matter of alleged fraud in relation to the case of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson in Kilwinning. When can we expect a decision to be taken as to whether there is to be a prosecution of Mr. Adam in that case?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I think that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that I cannot give him a firm date on that. However, he, among others, has made complaints not only to the Law Society of Scotland, for which I am not answerable, but to the procurator fiscal and the police, and I can assure him that the matters that he and others have put forward have been investigated actively.

Fox Hunting

38. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many complaints procurators fiscal have received about incidents arising from fox hunting; and how many prosecutions have taken place as a result.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: So far as I can ascertain, during the past year procurators fiscal have received 10 reports of such incidents. Seven—involving 29 accused persons — resulted in prosecution. In the remaining three—involving 17 accused—decisions have been taken not to prosecute.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Solicitor-General aware that on 19 January I wrote to the chief constable of Central Scotland police about an incident in my constituency on 3 January when some anti-hunt demonstrators, including two women, complained that they had been deliberately assaulted and their car had been vandalised by members or followers of the Linlithgow and Stirlingshire fox hunt? Now, over 13 weeks since the incident, I am still awaiting a report from the chief constable. Will the Solicitor-General personally ensure that those hunting hooligans are prosecuted and that the police deal with such complaints more impartially and expeditiously until such time as the barbaric practice of fox hunting is abolished altogether?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Having seen the hon. Gentleman in an interview on television with a member of the Scottish Nationalist party, he is certainly in a good position to talk about blood sports.

He will appreciate that reports from the police and letters of his to the chief constable are not directly matters for me. However, all complaints that are made, and all allegations of assault involving fox hunting, be it supporters of the hunt or those opposed to it, are properly considered. If he would like to give me further details of the matter about which he is concerned, I shall see that he gets a reply from me once a report has been received by the Crown Office.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. and learned Friend note that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) prejudges people on the basis of their legitimate sporting interests and regards as hooligans people who have not been charged and people who have not been convicted? What hope is there for the country when the Labour party does not even believe in the presumption of innocence?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My hon. and learned Friend is right to pick up that element of prejudgement in the hon. Gentleman's question. However, I should say to my hon. and learned Friend and the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) that where there are incidents over fox hunting we attempt, as best we can, to be even-handed and the prosecutions to which I have referred involve both those who are opposed to fox hunting as well as those who support it.

Property Rights

39. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether he has any intention of introducing further legislation to protect the property rights of citizens in Scotland.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Beyond the Debtors (Scotland) Bill there are no immediate plans to introduce further legislation affecting or protecting individual property rights. Any further reforms proposed by the Scottish Law Commission in particular will receive consideration either by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland or by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate.

Mrs. McCurley: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that farmers and landowners believe that the introduction of regional parks in Scotland is tantamount to the nationalisation of land by stealth? While existing legislation gives the right to the public peacefully to enjoy the countryside, no such rights are given to property owners.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The introduction of regional parks is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, although I happened to introduce that piece of legislation as a private Member's Bill. However, if my hon. Friend will let me know whether farmers have particular complaints in the regional park within her constituency, and whether there have been any criminal activities, I shall make sure that they are properly investigated.

BILL PRESENTED

London Government and other Councils (Annual Elections)

Dr. John Cunningham, supported by Mr. Jack Straw, Mr. Allan Roberts, Mr. Frank Dobson, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Ms. Jo Richardson, Mr. Brian Sedgemore and Mr. Allen McKay, presented a Bill to provide that London Borough Councillors and non-metropolitan district councillors shall be elected for a three-year term with one-third retiring annually; and to make transitional provision: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 April and to be printed. [Bill 136.]

Questions to Ministers

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Considering the draw for Prime Minister's questions, perhaps I am the last person to complain about questions not being called, but you will notice that on the Order Paper Question No. 40 is about the Zircon affair. I wonder whether there has been any request by Ministers to answer that question, because it is a matter of continuing importance and we have had no explanation of the outcome of police investigations into the BBC in Glasgow. As questions to the Law Officers started at 3.21 pm and you often call questions at 3.30 pm, Mr. Speaker, I wonder why, on this occasion, my question has not been called.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that we started at 3.21 pm; we started at 3.20 pm. I have to take account of the business before the House on any one day. Today is a heavy day. It would not be fair or right on other hon. Members to go over the time that is set down for questions. I am sorry that I was not able to reach the hon. Gentleman's question today and also that he was not called at Scottish Question Time. I did try hard.

Notice of Motion

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry that I have not been able to give you notice of this point of order, but I have just noticed what looks like a rather cruel April fool joke by the Table Office at the expense of Liberal party policies. I refer to the notice of motion now on the Order Paper, which is entitled "Promotion of Wind Energy".

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not the Table Office, but we are about to hear that.

Privatisation (Multiple Share Applications)

3.33 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it about a matter that arose today?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: I do not want to pre-empt the hon. Gentleman, but I should tell him before he starts that I would not be prepared to hear a re-run of the 40 minutes of points of order that we had yesterday.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not intend to re-run anything. I wish to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to a letter that you wrote to me, and that is not a re-run. It is a completely new matter. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that last week I wrote to you submitting that the behaviour of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) brought the House into disrepute and that therefore——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I again pre-empt the hon. Gentleman? He must not draw attention to a matter of privilege about which he wrote to me and on which I have replied, because he will know that the Committee of Privileges reported on it a good while ago. It was precisely to prevent the raising of such matters on the Floor of the House in that way that the Committee reported. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not breach that rule of the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall comply exactly with what the Committee of Privileges recommended. I do not intend to read the content of my application to you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the reply, which was not dealt with in that Committee's recommendations.

You wrote me a letter, Mr. Speaker, and in so doing you have effectively prevented the House and the country from knowing your ruling on the application on contempt that I made to you. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that I should be permitted to bring before the House that very brief letter because I cannot table it as a motion as a result of the rules that you very accurately and carefully set out for the House yesterday. Of course, it is only following yesterday's interventions that I now feel more free to introduce these matters in the way that I wish.

Mr. Speaker, in your letter of 7 April——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is precisely what I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to do. The hon. Gentleman wrote to me on a matter of privilege. I replied that I was unable to give the matter precedence as a matter of privilege. He cannot go beyond that. That is exactly what the Select Committee laid down.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I know of no rule in the whole of "Erskine May" or any rule of the House which prevents me as a Member of Parliament from raising on the Floor of the House a letter which you, Mr. Speaker, wrote to me, which should be in the public domain and about which the public want to know. We must be allowed to raise these matters. This letter is of public importance and some people may well construe it to be a historic document. It is your letter, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to allow me to bring it to the attention of my hon. Friends.

The letter reads——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to allow the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why not?

Mr. Speaker: —to break our rules on this matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What rules?

Mr. Speaker: The Privileges Committee reported on this matter. The hon. Gentleman and the House know that it was stated that a matter of privilege should be raised with Mr. Speaker who would consider it — as I have done—and write to the hon. Member concerned saying whether Mr. Speaker would give it precedence over the Orders of the Day. That is exactly what has happened. The hon. Gentleman may not go beyond that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to allow the hon. Gentleman to read out my letter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You say, Mr. Speaker, that you are not prepared——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to allow the hon. Gentleman to read out my letter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If I am not allowed to read out this letter, I want to ask you a question, Mr. Speaker. How can the letter appear in the *Official Report*? How can it arrive within the public domain? Tell me that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may legitimately table a motion setting out his views on the matter. That is what he should do.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: These are not my views, Mr. Speaker; they are your views. You are interpreting the rules as you see them. I put it to you that I am entitled to place this letter of yours——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have told the hon. Gentleman that I am not prepared to break the rules of this House. The present procedure was fully debated by the House, and I abide by the decision then taken.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No; I am not prepared——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise another matter.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear one more point of order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In the reply that you often send to hon. Members when they have raised matters of privilege, Mr. Speaker, you say that your function and responsibility is to decide whether a complaint of privilege should be given priority. May I ask you to explain to the House on what basis you decide whether a matter should be given priority?

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for my discretion. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I take into account many considerations, one of which may be whether any offence has been committed in a parliamentary sense against this House.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) consistently abuses —or attempts to abuse—the rules of this place. You made a very firm ruling several weeks ago. The House has been much better for that ruling. We implore you, Mr. Speaker, to keep the rules and procedures of this House in order. It seems most unfair to Conservative Members, who are behaving themselves, very properly, that the hon. Gentleman can indulge in such scurrilous behaviour time after time. It is politics by innuendo, and it is time to stop it.

Mr. Speaker: The House may rely on me to keep the rules of order in this House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You and your predecessors have said that the House has certain privileges. As I understand it, those privileges belong to the House as a whole. In law, they do not belong to individuals. This is a matter for the reputation of the House and for you, Sir. Understandably, in the country people are asking, "Is there one law for the rest of us and another law for Members of Parliament?" To ensure that there is confidence in the House, we must make it clear that the law applies to all.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, you said that the position of the Conservative Member in question was being considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions. Today the newspapers contain a report—I have it in my hand, since Tory Members raised the matter—to the effect that it is extremely unlikely that any prosecution will occur. To avoid repeated points of order day after day, what action can we take to ensure that a Conservative Member who has broken the law is treated no differently from any of our constituents? That is the issue at hand.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House will accept that, where such accusations are made, that is a matter for the courts. It cannot be right, and surely hon. Members do not wish, that the House should resort to trial by innuendo.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that the matters underlying this affair will be dealt with, and that presumably points of order will no longer be needed, as and when the law takes its course? When Labour Members have faced criminal charges, we have been content that the law should take its course. If hon. Members wish to conduct the debate in this way, they should be reminded that Opposition Members have faced criminal charges and have been convicted, and that we have been content that the law should take its course.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you remind the House, enjoying as it does absolute privilege, that it is not in its interests that Members of any political party should make a political scene or a mockery of the conduct of Members on either side of the House, or that they should abuse your copyright in the letters that you write, and the trust that you put in hon. Members when you send letters, to make cheap, bad points? It does nothing for the honour of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you have probably noticed during these exchanges, the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) has not appeared in the Chamber. That has helped you considerably, because it crossed my mind during the exchanges yesterday that had the hon. Member for Ynys Môn been here he would have heard some of my hon. Friends allege that the man was not honourable but was a cheat. That is the theoretical standpoint. Suppose that the matter continues for a while and eventually he turns up in the Chamber—and, in order to represent his constituents, he may eventually be forced to do that. One would expect him to come here. Then you, Mr. Speaker, will have a problem, which is the point of order. For instance, if an hon. Member says and believes that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn is not honourable but is a cheat, a crook, and a swindler, will you throw that hon. Member——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All hon. Members elected to this House are honourable. That goes for hon. Members on both sides of the House. In this country we are all subject to the courts. I repeat that this matter should be dealt with in that way and not by a process of points of order on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have seen the letter which you sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I have no wish to quote from the letter unless I have your permission or the permission of my hon. Friend, but I ask for clarification on one point.

I understand that part of the reason why no immediate action is being taken against the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) is that it is considered that this offence was outside the House and was unrelated to parliamentary proceedings. But I understand that the hon. Member supported and voted for the legislation to privatise British Telecom which gave him the opportunity to line his pockets and commit this offence. Many people outside the House will ask, if that is not a breach of privilege, if that is not contempt of the House, and if that is not abuse of one's position as a Member of Parliament, what is?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House would not expect me to give reasons for the decisions that I take in the exercise of my discretion. The hon. Gentleman has advanced his views. We dealt with this yesterday. There are clearly laid down procedures for contempt. If the hon. Gentleman wants to proceed in that way, he can do so. He only has to operate the rules which we have. There is no point in raising points of order with the Chair.

Promotion of Wind Energy

3.42 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to promote the generation of electricity by means of wind powered generators by encouraging appropriate research and development, reforming the rating valuation base for private wind generators and by providing for revised terms for the supply of electricity to the electricity boards from private wind powered generators; and for connected purposes.

Slowly but steadily, those with responsibility for securing our energy supply are recognising that renewable sources of energy can make a significant contribution to meeting our future energy needs. Of the various renewable alternatives, it appears that wind power is emerging as a front runner. Indeed, the Department of Energy seems to regard wind energy as the most promising of the renewable energy sources, with some experts predicting that up to 20 per cent. of our current electricity demand could be supplied by land-based generators and that an even greater contribution will be possible if we can successfully develop offshore arrays of wind turbine generators.

The potential contribution cannot be dismissed as marginal, as some have tried to do in the past. The purpose of the Bill which I seek leave to present is to help the development of this important energy resource. The Bill would have three principal strands: first, the promotion of research and development; secondly, amending the valuation base for the rating of private wind generators; and, thirdly, improving the terms under which private wind generators can sell electricity to the electricity boards.

It is only fair to put on record the fact that the Department of Energy, the generating boards, research councils and the private sector have already co-operated well in the research and demonstration programmes, not least in my constituency. Two generators are already operating on Burgar hill in Orkney, and a 3 MW machine should be operational this year as part of a construction, design and monitoring programme involving the British Wind Energy Group, the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the Department of Energy. In Shetland a project is underway to establish how much wind energy can be fed into the Shetland grid and how wind installations might be operated in the most efficient manner.

Further south, the Central Electricity Generating Board is monitoring the performance of a recently opened vertical axis turbine at Carmarthen bay. The board has planned a 1 MW turbine for Richborough in Kent. Therefore, considerable research and development is already taking place. However, it is now necessary for us to look forward towards a major national wind energy programme.

A much increased purchasing programme by the electricity boards would give a considerable boost to our home-based manufacturers, enabling them to undertake more research and development and demonstration of their own, and would put them on a better footing to exploit the home market and to take advantage of the considerable export opportunities. If that is to happen, it is important that the underlying programme of research and innovative support must be undertaken by Government, their agencies and the research councils.

The British Wind Energy Association recently published a paper outlining what it believes to be a necessary programme of demonstration projects, research and development. It would not be realistic for the House to demand that the Department of Energy should slavishly follow that programme in every detail. However, my Bill provides that the Department should prepare and present to Parliament a five-year programme principally directed towards research and development and wind energy. It provides also for a programme of demonstration projects, which will be necessary to underpin a major expansion of wind power generators in this country.

The other two measures that are features of the Bill are intended mainly to help private generators. One of the principal aims of the Energy Act 1983 was to facilitate the sale of electricity produced by private generators to the electricity boards or to third parties on terms which, at the time, were claimed to be fair. Indeed, in moving the Bill's Second Reading, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), then the Secretary of State for Energy, now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated:

"As a result of the Bill, private generators should no longer have cause for complaint. These measures will, I am confident, encourage the growth of private electricity generation in the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 24 November 1982; Vol. 32, c. 867.]

The object of that Energy Bill, now the Energy Act 1983, was right and was supported by my right hon. and hon. Friends. However, experience suggests that, in practice, it has not been as effective as was hoped at the time. No provision was made, for example, to take account of the heavy rates burden that has fallen on private wind generators. Indeed, in recent months, this has been focused upon by unsuccessful appeal of the Wind Energy Group against a rating valuation on its wind generator in Ilfracombe which, when rates were applied, amounted to half of the estimated annual revenue from the machine. In my constituency, a private wind generator has received a rates bill which works out at more than 60 per cent. of its estimated revenue.

I understand that the Department of the Environment's position is that any appeals for rates to be modified should be delayed until such time as the new legislation on local government finance has been put into place. However, the view of those involved in the industry, especially those involved in the manufacture of wind turbines, is that the time delay that that would involve would be too long.

What is needed, in their view—and, I hope, in the view of the House—is much more immediate action to ensure the survival and prosperity of our wind turbine manufacturing industry.

We shall not encourage the development of private generation by wind power if operators face penal rates bills. It is estimated, for example, that in relation to the generating costs of the electricity boards, rates bills amount to one sixth of a penny, whereas for those operating private generators they amount to 2p per unit. My Bill seeks to establish a formula whereby assessors would be obliged to consider the relatively low running costs of wind turbine generating plant, and fix the valuation with greater reference to profits or units produced rather than to the exorptionally high capital costs that appear to be the basis of present valuations.

My Bill would provide for fairer, more favourable terms to be provided by electricity boards to those who are offering a private supply of electricity to the boards. The

[Mr. James Wallace]

terms which electricity boards have been offering have not been as attractive as many anticipated and in many cases the availability charge has been particularly onerous. There is a case for an availability charge when substantial new plant and lines must be laid to a new wind farm development, but when electricity has already been supplied to a private generator it seems exceptionally onerous to impose an additional charge on the private operator. My Bill seeks to provide that such a charge should not be made where electricity is already available.

If we encourage the development of wind power, as I believe we should, because it is clean, renewable, can make a significant contribution to supplying our energy needs and because many believe that is one of the cheapest forms of generating electricity, we should be prepared to give private wind generators more favourable terms than they have at present. In the United States, favourable rates for the purchase of power generated are given in addition to tax and grant incentives. My Bill seeks to amend the Energy Act to provide more favourable terms than exist.

Wind energy is increasingly proving itself to be an alternative, cheap and plentiful source of energy. Developments to date have provided us with a skilled work force, experienced scientists, and a lead in this technology. If Britain is to maintain that lead, and if we are to tap the considerable potential for exports, it is important that our home market should now be given a substantial boost. The purpose of the Bill is to promote wind energy, particularly in the home market. I hope that the House will give me leave to present the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. Michael Forsyth, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Tony Speller and Mr. Donald Stewart.

Promotion of Wind Energy

Mr. James Wallace accordingly presented a Bill to promote the generation of electricity by means of wind powered generators by encouraging appropriate research and development, reforming the rating valuation base for private wind generators and by providing for revised terms for the supply of electricity to the electricity boards from private wind powered generators; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 June and to be printed. [Bill 135.]

Orders of the Day

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 16

Power of Secretary of State to direct the closure etc. of roads

"The following section shall be inserted after section 19 of the 1978 Act—

"Power of Secretary of State to direct the closure etc. of roads

19A.—(1) The Secretary of State may by order direct—

(a) that any highway specified in the order shall either be wholly closed or be closed to such extent, or diverted in such manner, as may be so specified;

(b) that any highway specified in the order, being a highway which has already been wholly or partly closed, or diverted, in the exercise or purported exercise of any power conferred by or under a relevant enactment, shall continue to be so closed or diverted by virtue of the order.

(2) Any person who, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse (the proof of which lies on him), interferes with—

(a) works executed in connection with the closure or diversion of any highway specified in an order under this section (whether executed in pursuance of any such order or in pursuance of the exercise or purported exercise of any such power as is mentioned in subsection (1)*(b)* above), or

(b) apparatus, equipment or any other thing used in pursuance of any such order in connection with the closure or diversion of any such highway,

shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

(3) In this section 'relevant enactment' means section 19(2) or (3) above, section 17(2) or (3) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973, or the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland) 1922.

(4) Nothing in this section shall prejudice the operation of section 19(2) or (3) above.".'.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.57 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I shall speak briefly to the new clause because it represents no change of policy and will not lead to any more road closures. It is merely intended to clarify the legal basis of the closures which are already in force and which were authorised under a range of earlier enactments. A considerable number of highways and border crossings have been physically closed for many years under the authority of a general order made in 1970 under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland) 1922

by the then Minister of Home Affairs. The legality of that order has been preserved since 1973 by appropriate transitional clauses in emergency provisions legislation.

Any closure or continued closure of a particular highway on border crossing has social, economic and political consequences which must be considered in conjunction with security requirements. The decision appropriately rests, and should be seen to rest, with the Secretary of State. My right hon. Friend and I keep the need for the closure of border crossings under constant review. The new clause will make it clear that the closure or continued closure of any border crossing has been specifically authorised by the Secretary of State and details will be published in the *Belfast Gazette*.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): We find ourselves in the not uncommon difficulty on Report that a substantial slab of legislative material is placed before us which we do not have the same opportunity to examine in detail as would be available to us in Committee. In particular, this is probably experienced by other hon. Members in considering this and subsequent Government new clauses.

I am sure that the Minister will readily respond to the queries which arise in the minds of those studying the new clause. He has explained that it enables the Secretary of State, by an order, to validate—I am not seeking to use the correct legal expression—closures which have taken place under existing enactments and, particularly in view of subsection (4) of the new clause, closures which may have taken place under section 19 of the emergency provisions Act 1978.

The difficulty that some of us find in studying it is that it apparently applies, for example, to subsection (1)*(b)* of the new clause where highways already closed under those enactments have that closure confirmed by an order made by the Secretary of State under the new clause, whereas in subsection (1)*(a)* he appears to be acting de novo. In subsequent (1)*(a)*—it does not seem that any other part of the new clause must be construed with that subsection—we are creating a new power for the Secretary of State to order the closure of a highway. No doubt it is desirable that there should be power, for emergency reasons and otherwise, for the closure of highways to be ordered.

This new clause is to be inserted in an emergency powers Bill, so presumably the only closure which is being envisaged in the new closures which would occur under subsection (1)*(a)* is a closure deemed necessary by the Secretary of State for the purposes of the emergency provisions Act. In other words, what one misses as to subsection (1)*(a)* is anything which directs the Secretary of State to have regard to the sort of considerations which in the other provisions of the Bill justify the powers which are taken in exercising his order-making power under subsection (1)*(a)*. I am not certain that I am yet receiving signals that I have successfully transmitted my message to the Minister, so perhaps I may take another moment or two to make sure that, since we are not in Committee, my point has been seized.

If we take subsection (1)*(a)* as it stands and in isolation—it does not appear to be qualified by any other part of the new clause except by subsection (4), which does not interfere with what I am saying—it seems to create an unlimited power on the part of a Secretary of State by order to direct that a specified highway shall be closed. That seems to be out of line with the general purposes of the Bill into which the provision is to be inserted. It does not, for example, say that, if the Secretary of State is satisfied that the closure of any specified highway is necessary for the purposes of the Bill, he may by order authorise its closure. It creates an apparently unrestricted and unlimited order-making power to close highways.

I accept that when we get to subsection (1)*(b)* all is well, because we are then dealing with highways which have been closed under enactments which give the Secretary of State power, for emergency purposes, for a highway to be closed. It may be that in subsection (1)*(a)* we have inadvertently created a new and unlimited power on the part of the Secretary of State by order to close highways and thus short-circuit the other provisions for so doing.

I am glad to have received some signals of comprehension, if not of agreement, from the Minister.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Those of us who foresaw the Bill and that within it there would be a lessening of the derogation from the normal practices will be disappointed by the proposing of the new clause. It deals with probably one of the most emotive issues in Northern Ireland life, yet here it is being re-enacted—because that is exactly what it is—in a piece of legislation that we had all hoped to welcome as an easing of the derogation from the 1978 Act. The Minister is aware of the problems that that has created in the past, is creating at the moment and will create in future.

The border of Northern Ireland is not a straight line running from A to B. It moves in an irregular fashion through different roads and through people's land. I know, from experience of my constituency and of the area in which I live, of the difficulties that this creates, especially for the farming community. I shall give an example of those difficulties. To get from one field to another, two farmers must travel approximately six miles to fodder cattle or till land in an adjoining field. This is an on-going problem for anyone involved in the agriculture industry. That work is not done once a week, once a month or once every six months; it must be done on a daily basis.

That is what the new clause deals with. It also deals with other aspects of people's lives. The shopping, communication and commerce aspects of many people's lives do not relate to Northern Ireland; they relate to the Republic of Ireland. Again, I can cite instances of people having to travel many miles to obtain the ordinary necessities of life because of the closure of border roads. That is an emotive factor. In the past it has created many problems for people.

I am not convinced that there are any security benefits in closing roads. I should like to hear the opinion of the Minister of State about the reduction of terrorist incidents. I should like him to show some proof of the effect of the closure of any road in Northern Ireland, or whether it can be quantified in such a way that it can be said that it has reduced terrorist incidents.

We need some definition of the term "highway". When we use that term, we are not talking about the type of road which is closed in Northern Ireland; we are talking about something different—that which runs through a person's farm and which is essential to his tending of that farm.

The new clause is a retrograde step, especially since we are dealing with an international agreement between the two Governments of the north and south of Ireland. At the same time as this agreement is trying to promote security and co-operation between them so that we shall be able to

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

live free of terrorism, the two Governments, which are beginning to work closely together, are blocking off the roads between their jurisdictions.

We must be in no doubt that that will be the net effect of this measure. No doubt the Minister will say that in effect it simply regularises the situation. The Minister may have some pangs when he starts to regularise that which is implemented under the infamous Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland) 1922. The Minister would have grave reservations about that. This is an emotive issue. The clause will make life very difficult for the people living in the border areas of Northern Ireland. It should be opposed.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) focused his thoughts on the frontier region and drew attention to the inconvenience that would be caused. He represents a constituency in that region, so I suppose that that is natural. But it would be a great mistake to imagine that only the frontier region is affected. The hon. Gentleman drew attention to the fact that landowners and farmers were sometimes inconvenienced. He said that on some occasions they have to drive six miles to go into a field on the other side of the barricade. It may be of some small comfort for him to know that in an area surrounding one of our major airports a farmer whom I know has to drive seven and a half miles simply to get into a field that adjoins his dwelling house.

No one will deny that inconvenience can be and is caused. The hon. Gentleman said that some inconvenience has an effect on people's lives. However, if there is any possibility that these measures will preserve life, even if they result in the preservation of only one life, we must all accept and bear with fortitude the inconvenience and hardship caused by them.

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) described this as a substantial slab of legislation, and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) made quite a meal of what is a modest tidying-up measure. Let me deal with the points that they made.

I can tell the right hon. Member for South Down that neither in the so-called Porter order of 1970—the order made by the then Minister for Home Affairs—nor in section 19 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 was the power to close roads to be exercised only in relation to the emergency. We follow the same pattern in this legislation. But, in practice, no road has been closed under these powers except for reasons connected with the emergency. This measure is in an emergency provisions Bill and the power would in practice be exercised only in relation to roads where closure was necessitated by the emergency. That has been and will continue to be the practice.

I am slightly surprised that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh takes odds with the fact that the Government consider it more appropriate to update the provision and to make it clear that the authority for this rests with the Secretary of State rather than on an order made about 17 years ago by a Minister for Home Affairs in a Stormont Government. There are serious political, social and economic matters which should be taken into account when border closures are being considered. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman mentioned their impact on local farms, and so on, which we always take into account when we review these matters.

It is the considered judgment of the security forces in Northern Ireland—the police and the Army—that the sensible and selective closure of roads in the border areas in particular can make a substantial contribution to the improvement of security in those areas.

Mr. Mallon: Can the Minister tell us how many border roads are closed at present and where they are, because then we might be able to draw the same conclusion from that which the Minister is drawing from the opinion of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army?

Mr. Scott: I cannot attempt this afternoon to enumerate the roads that are closed, but I can give the House an idea of the scale of closures. There are roughly 300 road crossings between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Of those, approximately 100 are closed, of which about half would have been closed under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and about half under the so-called Porter order. That is the scale of present closures.

Both intelligence and observation show that a considerable number of incidents still happen involving the use of roads crossing the border. We need to look carefully, with the advice of our professional security advisers, to see when and where such closures, balanced with the other factors that I mentioned, can make a significant contribution to security. Sensible and selective closures can be of some help.

This is a tidying-up exercise. In itself, it will not result in any new road closures, but it will put them, including those which affect border crossing, on a proper footing.

4.15 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The Minister referred to the reasons for the closures which take place under existing legislation. I was just looking at section 19 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, the operation of which is specifically preserved by subsection (4) of the new section. In referring to the closure of roads it says:

"so far as he considers it immediately necessary for the preservation of the peace or the maintenance of order".

It is not clear whether such a provision is imported into the terminology of new section 19A(1)*(a)*.

It might be germane if the Minister could tell the House to what parliamentary procedure an order made under these powers will be subject.

Mr. Scott: These orders are not subject to any parliamentary procedure. They never have been and it is not proposed that they will be in this legislation. The part of the 1978 Act to which the right hon. Gentleman refers does not refer specifically to the emergency, but I assert —I hope that the House will accept this—that the very fact that it is contained in emergency provisions legislation means that it would not be used for any other purpose. It has not been in the past and will not be in the future.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Will the Minister assure us that we need not take literally his assurance that this legislation would not lead to further closures of cross-border roads? Did he mean that it would not necessarily mean the closure of cross-border roads, or does he preclude the closure of any further cross-border roads?

It might be well that those listening to the Minister would believe that that was the possibility. The most recent victim of terrorism in my constituency was murdered last Friday. His murderers escaped across a road which I have constantly drawn to the attention of the Secretary of State, the previous Secretary of State and the Secretary of State before that. Despite the fact that the road is still used for the murder of my constituents, the Northern Ireland Office does nothing about it. Can the Minister assure us that he is not precluding the possibility of something more positive being done about that road?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman reads my words, he will see that I said that, of itself, this provision will not lead to the closure of more border roads. But, of course, proposals for road closures will be considered on their merits as they come forward from the security forces.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is noticeable that all the speakers so far have an intimate knowledge of Northern Ireland because they are Members of Parliament for Northern Ireland. But some of us have to try to grasp the matters without having such an intimate knowledge.

I have looked at section 19, and, short of war—one of the points that Sir George Baker made was that there is not a war, despite what some claim — section 19 appears to be adequate. I cannot understand the fundamental difference between the new clause and section 19. I know that there are deep feelings about this, but some of us would like to know the precise difference. Security forces anywhere, whether police in a peaceful situation or security forces in a difficult situation such as that in Northern Ireland, always demand more security than is justified at a fixed moment.

Mr. Scott: Approximately half the border roads are closed under the 1970 order made by the then Minister for Home Affairs. There is slight doubt about the legal validity of some of those road closures. The order was cast in wide terms and there is some legal doubt as to whether it was used properly to justify the closure of a particular road. Therefore, we needed to validate those closures where it is considered they should continue, but section 19 of the 1978 Act that enables the Secretary of State to authorise actions to close roads is not applicable because many of the roads have been closed for the past 17 years. We are seeking to validate those closures to ensure that they are on firm legal ground for the future and therefore validated by the Secretary of State upon authority that is published in the *Belfast Gazette*.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I did not follow the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister gave to the intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). He mentioned a border crossing that he said should have been closed and, as I understand it, he made that suggestion to previous Secretaries of State. Therefore, will my hon. Friend urgently undertake a careful investigation of the case for the closure of that border crossing in view of the appalling toll of murder in Fermanagh and South Tyrone?

Mr. Scott: As I said to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), when the security forces put forward recommendations for road closures we consider them on their merits. Obviously what the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone has said will be drawn to the attention of the security forces, but I cannot go further than that at the moment.

Mr. Mallon: The Minister has informed us that one third of border roads are closed. When we consider the number of border roads that are surveyed by lookout posts and the number that have permanent checkpoints, we narrow down the number substantially. Again I ask the Minister what is the evidence over the past 16 years to suggest that the closure of any border road has prevented the type of murderous activity to which the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) has referred? By closing a specific road, how do we know that one simply does not point the terrorist in the direction not just of another road, but along another route? Those routes exist across fields and towns right along the border. I hope that the Minister can quantify the evidence for us because it appears that, rather than being a deterrent against people involved in violent activities, such road closures have been used as a sop to those who wish to see the closure of border roads.

Mr. Scott: This debate was not intended to run into a general discussion of the principle of whether particular road closures or the general policy of border road closures is wise. Obviously there is a distinction between the views held by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh and the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone and those who advise the Secretary of State and myself on security policy in Northern Ireland. I am prepared to rest on professional judgment in such matters.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 19

POWER OF SECRETARY OF STATE TO SET TIME LIMITS IN RELATION TO PRELIMINARY PROCEEDINGS FOR SCHEDULED OFFENCES

"The following section shall be inserted after section 5 of the 1978 Act—

"Time limits on preliminary proceedings

Power of Secretary of State to set time limits in relation to preliminary proceedings for scheduled offences.

5A.—(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision, with respect to any specified preliminary stage of proceedings for a scheduled offence, as to the maximum period—

(a) to be allowed to the prosecution to complete that stage;

(b) during which the accused may, while awaiting completion of that stage, be—

(i) in the custody of a magistrates' court; or

(ii) in the custody of the Crown Court,

in relation to that offence.

(2) The regulations may, in particular—

(a) provide for—

(i) the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981,

(ii) section 2 above, or

(iii) any other enactment, or any rule of law, relating to bail,

to apply in relation to cases to which custody or overall time limits apply subject to such modifications as may be specified (being modifications which the Secretary of State considers necessary in consequence of any provision made by the regulations);

[Mr. Scott]

(b) provide for time limits imposed by the regulations to cease to have effect in cases where, after the institution of proceedings for a scheduled offence, the Attorney General for Northern Ireland has certified that the offence in question is not to be treated as a scheduled offence;

(c) make such provision with respect to the procedure to be followed in criminal proceedings as the Secretary of State considers appropriate in consequence of any other provision of the regulations; and

(d) make such transitional provision in relation to proceedings instituted before of the commencement of any provision of the regulations as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(3) Where separate counts of an indictment allege a scheduled offence and an offence which is not a scheduled offence, then (subject to, and in accordance with, the provisions of the regulations) the regulations shall have effect in relation to the latter offence as if it were a scheduled offence.

(4) The Crown Court may, at any time before the expiry of a time limit imposed by the regulations, extend, or further extend, that limit if it is satisfied—

(a) that there is good and sufficient cause for doing so; and

(b) that the prosecution has acted with all due expedition.

(5) Where, in relation to any proceedings for a relevant offence, an overall time limit has expired before the completion of the stage of the proceedings to which the limit applies, the accused shall be treated, for all purposes, as having been acquitted of that offence.

(6) Where—

(a) a person escapes from the custody of a magistrates' court or of the Crown Court before the expiry of a custody time limit which applies in his case; or

(b) a person who has been released on bail in consequence of the expiry of a custody time limit—

(i) fails to surrender himself into the custody of the court at the appointed time; or

(ii) is arrested by a constable in connection with any breach, or apprehended breach, of any condition of his bail,

the regulations shall, so far as they provide for any custody time limit in relation to the preliminary stage in question, be disregarded.

(7) Where—

(a) a person escapes from the custody of a magistrates' court or of the Crown Court; or

(b) a person who has been released on bail fails to surrender himself into the custody of the court at the appointed time,

the overall time limit which applies in his case in relation to the stage which the proceedings have reached at the time of the escape or, as the case may be, at the appointed time shall, so far as the relevant offence in question is concerned, cease to have effect.

(8) Where a person is convicted of a relevant offence in any proceedings, the exercise, in relation to any preliminary stage of those proceedings, of the power conferred by subsection (4) above shall not be called into question on any appeal against that conviction.

(9) In this section—

"custody of the Crown Court" includes custody to which a person is committed in pursuance of—

(a) Article 37 or 40(4) of the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (magistrates' court committing accused for trial); or

(b) section 51(8) of the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 (magistrates' court dealing with a person brought before it following his arrest in pursuance of a warrant issued by the Crown Court);

"custody of a magistrates' court" means custody to which a person is committed in pursuance of Article 47 or 49 of the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (remand);

"custody time limit" means a time limit imposed by the regulations in pursuance of subsection (1)*(b)* above or, where any such limit has been extended by the Crown Court under subsection (4) above, the limit as so extended;

"preliminary stage", in relation to any proceedings, does not include any stage of the proceedings after the accused has been arraigned in the Crown Court or, in the case of a summary trial, the magistrates' court has begun to hear evidence for the prosecution at the trial;

"overall time limit" means a time limit imposed by the regulations in pursuance of subsection (1)*(a)* above or, where any such limit has been extended by the Crown Court under subsection (4) above, the limit as so extended;

"relevant offence" means—

(a) a scheduled offence, or

(b) an offence in relation to which the regulations have effect in accordance with subsection (3) above; and

"specifed" means specified in the regulations.

(10) For the purposes of the application of any custody time limit in relation to a person who is in the custody of a magistrates' court or of the Crown Court—

(a) all periods during which he is in the custody of a magistrates' court in respect of the same offence shall be aggregated and treated as a single continuous period; and

(b) all periods during which he is in the custody of the Crown Court in respect of the same offence shall be aggregated and treated similarly.".'.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Scott: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 18—*Limit on time between remand and commencement of trial*—

'After subsection (5) of section 2 of the 1978 ACt there shall be inserted the words:—

"(5A) No trial of a person charged with a scheduled offence shall commence more than 110 days from the date of that person's first remand for the said offence; when new charges are presented arising from the same circumstances a person's trial shall commence within 110 days from the date of the original remand for the original offence.

(5B) No voluntary bill of indictment shall be capable of extending that 110 days period for any person who has been committed for trial in relation to a scheduled offence."'.

Government amendment No. 31.

Mr. Scott: New clause 19 arises from discussions in Committee and picks up the idea behind the amendment

tabled by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) who was supported by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume). It reproduces, in respect of scheduled offences in Northern Ireland, the provisions of section 22 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985.

The new clause will give my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the power to make regulations imposing time limits on specified preliminary stages of cases involving scheduled offences. I must emphasise, however, that it is only an enabling power and that we do not intend to introduce actual time limits immediately. Indeed, I am not in a position to say when it will be possible to introduce such time limits. The fact is that it is unlikely that there will be another opportunity to take the necessary power for at least five years, when this legislation will come up for reconsideration. In the light of the widespread concern that was expressed in Committee about delays in coming to trial and the support given in Committee for the concept of statutory time limits, we decided that it was right to take the power now.

The new clause will give my right hon. Friend a power to set limits on the length of time that a person may be remanded in custody during any of those specified stages and provides that a breach of any such time limit will lead to the release of the accused on bail. It will also confer on my right hon. Friend a power to set limits on the total length of time to be allowed for any of those specified stages. It provides that if any such time limit is breached the accused person should be treated as having been acquitted. It also provides that the courts may, on application, extend a time limit in any particular case where they are satisfied that there is good cause to do so and that the prosecution has acted with all due dispatch. In introducing this new clause I believe that I am maintaining a tradition of concern and action on this matter by the relevant authorities.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have given sustained priority to measures intended to eliminate avoidable delays between first remand and trial, particularly in scheduled cases, in Northern Ireland. A list of the measures taken over the previous couple of years was given by me in a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) on 16 December 1986. Additionally, the relevant agencies meet regularly to monitor and evaluate the performance of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland. Their recent reports suggest, encouragingly, that the average period between first remand and trial in scheduled cases in Northern Ireland is likely to reduce over the next 18 months or so. This exercise has also demonstrated that the causes of delay are many and complicated and often arise from the defence rather than from the prosecution, notably when a defendant or group of defendants elect to wait until the defence counsel of their choice is available to act for them. I am certainly impressed and encouraged by the efficiency of the courts, the court service and the prosecuting authorities and their collective determination to eliminate avoidable delays. They have a heavy and particularly intractable case load to deal with and cannot be held responsible for the delays that occur in some cases.

4.30 pm

Despite that, and despite the encouraging prospect that average periods on remand will fall over the next couple of years, we have decided that it would be right to propose the new clause. As I made clear in Committee, before introducing actual time limits we would want to take account of the experience gained in England and Wales of the operation of actual time limits in three police force areas. These are being applied from the first of this month, so it will be some time before any conclusions can be drawn.

It is also necessary to gather more data from the current monitoring and evaluation exercise in Northern Ireland that I described in Committee so that we can establish what time limits, if any, it would be desirable to set. Even then we would have to weigh the various arguments very carefully. Our objective is to maintain a degree of pressure on the criminal justice system and to set testing but reasonable targets for disposing of cases, with the aim of maintaining public confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland and thus helping further to isolate the terrorists.

The Government would find it necessary to be confident that any scheme was unlikely to have the effect of procuring the release on bail or even the discharge of a person indicted for serious terrorist crime. The background against which we are working in Northern Ireland is more serious and complex than in England and Wales. Therefore, any decision to introduce actual time limits is some way off and will not be an easy one. Certainly before taking a decision the Government will study most carefully the views of all those involved in the criminal justice process. Therefore, at the moment the Government are proposing that there should be an enabling power to introduce time limits. This is a powerful earnest of our concern to do all that we can to reduce delays in the administration of justice, and I hope that the new clause will command the support of the whole House.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: In Committee there was a general desire to see some limitation placed on the length of time elapsing between a person being taken into custody and being brought to trial in court. One's initial reaction to the new clause was therefore one of disappointment to discover that it was an enabling power and simply a power to make regulations. This disappointment is not lessened by a study of amendment No. 31, which, under your direction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are considering in conjunction with the new clause.

If I understand it rightly, that amendment specifically exempts the new clause from the operation of section 32 of the 1978 Act. This means that instead of the affirmative procedure applying to such regulations so that there would be reasonable debate on the occasion of their being brought into force, we would have the negative procedure, which in practical terms means that we shall not debate them at all.

Much of what the Minister said about the important considerations surrounding this specified length of time makes it all the more desirable that when a time limit is introduced as a matter of law the House should not merely have the opportunity, but should be required, to debate it before assent is given to the regulations. I hope that, even if the House is satisfied at this stage with a regulation-making power, the Government will reconsider the desirability of making that exception in schedule 1, under amendment No. 31. There ought to be an affirmative

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

power governing the regulations made in so important a matter as this, and there ought to be a review of the circumstances in which that time limit is laid down.

I am sure that I am not alone in feeling disappointed that the Government have not found themselves able at this stage to write into the Bill that which will be written in due course into regulations. This is not one of those cases where the regulations have to be so complicated that it saves time and trouble all round to put the matter into regulations instead of into the Bill. Presumably the time periods that the Government have in mind could perfectly easily have been specified in the Bill by means of amendments to it.

The Government claim that it is too early to assess or to be able to determine, even experimentally, the time limits that would be practicable in Northern Ireland conditions. I am not sure that there will be general assent to that proposition, but even if there were assent there is a different way in which this could have been done. A provision could have been put into the Bill to impose time limits, and the commencement date of that provision could itself be left to ministerial order. If the Minister had proceeded in that way we could have had the time periods in the Bill itself and the Government would have the opportunity for which they have asked to consider the experience in England and Wales, and to consider the circumstances in the Province, without bringing that provision into effect.

Even in its present terms, this is not an offer that those of us who were on the Committee would be disposed to refuse. However, we would be understating the matter if we did not say that we are disappointed at having failed to write the limiting periods of time into the Bill, even with some possibility of delaying the operation of these periods introduced by way of an amendment.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I, too, wish to express some disappointment with what my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office said. That is because what is at the moment in many respects a nebulous Bill becomes even more nebulous through this clause which contains no indication whatever of the time limit involved. My hon. Friend did not even refer to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that probably 110 days was the ideal time. That is the time specified in his clause. Can my hon. Friend at least say whether he thinks 110 days is too long, or too short? Obviously, even one day is a day too long for a person who may be innocent.

Can my hon. Friend give the House any idea of when he expects these regulations to come before us? He said that that was not easy to assess and that it was still some time off. Can he help the House by telling us the average length of time that a person is held in custody before he is charged with a scheduled offence of the type that we are considering? We are perhaps not anxious to peer too far into the future, but this sort of helpful information must be available to the Northern Ireland Office and would help the House to understand a little better what the Minister has in mind. I have grave reservations about endorsing the new clause in its present nebulous form.

Mr. Mallon: Like previous speakers, I, too, feel a sense of disappointment. In Committee this was one of the areas about which there was a consensus that positive changes were needed. This is a very small and lukewarm step and it is disappointing that the Minister has not seen fit to give us an idea of the time limits that he is considering.

This is one of the most emotive issues in the North of Ireland, and that is perfectly understandable, because some people have been on remand for upwards of three years. In effect, that is the equivalent of a six-year prison sentence, and the person serves it before he is found guilty. That is bad for any society and unjust to any person. I restate my disappointment that the Minister has not taken his courage in his hands, even on this small issue. At least he could have given an indication of the time limits that he envisages, and when those could become operative.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Many hon. Members who did not have the benefit of serving on the Committee that considered the Bill are understandably somewhat mystified by some of the debates today. I took the trouble to have a cursory glance at the Committee *Hansard*, and I was impressed by the arguments from both sides of the Committee in favour of making the changes that were mentioned by the hon. Members for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and for Harborough (Sir J. Farr).

In the Second Reading debate on 16 December my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) said:

"The time that defendants may be held in custody in Northern Ireland without a trial is a serious matter and one that should be tackled without further delay."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. 1111.]

Like the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, I would be interested to know what the trends have been and the average length of time that people are now being held in custody before being brought to trial.

Can the Minister tell us about the numbers of people involved, and whether different offences are treated in different ways by the court? Sometimes the defendants are to blame for demanding a different kind of legal representation or different counsel. How far is that the fault of the prosecution, because of its dilatoriness, and how far the fault of the police? It would be useful to know that.

It is worth reminding the House of what Sir George Baker said in his report:

"One objective must be to concentrate the minds of the prosecuting authorities on speed or at least on reducing delay . . . I recommend that any prisoner who has been held in custody for 12 months or more without having been committed for trial must be granted bail without surety."

That is a straightforward, sensible recommendation. Although it is good to hear the Minister say that he concurs with its spirit, I hope that we shall move towards that procedure before too long.

I agree with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) about the kind of procedure that should be used, and that it would be better in include it in the Bill now. I hope that we shall not resort to procedures that deny the House adequate discussions on these important issues.

A comparison has been made with the Scottish 110-day procedure. It is true that Sir George Baker pointed out in his report that the Scottish legal system is very different from our own and from that which applies in Northern Ireland. He said that it was not possible merely to translate the experiences of Scotland into those of Northern Ireland. Have the Department and the Minister had a chance to study the procedures that are used in Scotland? Does the Minister have any sympathy with the suggestion of 110 days that is contained in new clause 18?

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Clearly, there are deep differences between us about the whole area of emergency provisions. As I apprehend it, we are agreed that there cannot be a complete and precipitate return to normality in Northern Ireland, but we differ in our reactions to which measures are justifiable, which represent too draconian an invasion of individual rights and which serve only to alienate people and thereby bring the system into disrepute. Therefore, we differ as to which provisions are counter-productive.

4.45pm

In the course of our proceedings we have not resolved those differences—so much is clear from the debate—but we have at least come closer to understanding one another's arguments than at any time—so far as I can recollect—in the past.

The arguments about the length of time during which unconvicted people are remanded in custody will be the subject of later discussion. I imagine that they will reveal deep divisions between us. However, the Minister of State has clearly listened to some of the arguments that we advanced in Committee. To judge from the fact that new clause 19 was tabled at a late stage, I suspect that he may have had long discussions with his ministerial colleagues and, possibly, with officials. I shall not press him for further information about that.

The amount of thought that has gone into a measure is not always directly proportional to the number of words in it. Though it is clear from the length and draftsmanship of the clause that a great deal of thought has gone into it, I do not believe that it meets all the problems that were ventilated in Committee. I agree with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and other speakers that we should have liked something much more robust. I agree with the right hon. Member for South Down that amendment No. 31 displays a defensive attitude on the part of someone in the Government. If the clause were fresh and we were in a position to table amendments to it, many of us would readily do that.

I believe that we should encourage the Government in well doing. I should certainly not like it to be said of the Minister of State by his colleagues that all that he had achieved was to provide additional difficulties for the Government. We shall be pressing the Secretary of State—he may have made a rod for his own back—to use some of the powers in the new clause. In the circumstances, it represents some advance in the Government's thinking, so I venture to welcome it without prejudice to any representations that we shall make about the use of the powers. It is not wholly absent from my mind that a different Government at some time in the future—be it near or far—may find it helpful to have the power on the statute book, so in the circumstances I venture to welcome the new clause.

Mr. Flannery: I want briefly to support the new clause because of a salutary experience that I had when I went with a delegation two or three years ago to visit the prisons in Northern Ireland. We made a point of going to the women's prison in south Armagh. It contained about 34 women and we spoke to every one of them that day. They were being strip-searched weekly and taken across to the court. We even went into the detail of looking at the strip-search book, checking the rooms to see whether they were private, and walking the distance to the court to check whether they had contact with anyone on the way.

That was hard enough for anyone without experience to understand. Even more difficult were the conversations about how long those women had been there without trial. For an ordinary person, 110 days is surely quite sufficient. Some of those people had been there for a length of time that alarmed me. Some of them were there in connection with the Dropping Well pub bombing and, of course, we are shocked by such terrible things, but trial presupposes that the condemned person is innocent until he is proved guilty. It is bound to enrage people—especially those who know nothing about it—if they are kept without trial for an unconscionable length of time. That experience shook me, as it would any ordinary person who did not understand the process. I want to know how many people have been in prison for longer than 110 days, so that all of us understand the position on which to base our attitudes. That is why I support the period of 110 days, which seems a long time to be held without trial.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): If I recall clearly, the Minister said that he thought it would be a long time before the Government would be in a position to bring in the time limits over which they have power in the new clause. There are such time limits in Scotland. There was general concern in Britain about long periods of detention on remand, which are not as bad as the periods that obtain in Northern Ireland. The Home Affairs Select Committee recommended that Britain should consider introducing time limits. The Government responded sympathetically by setting up feasibility studies on implementing time limits. The Minister of State did not tell us anything about setting up feasibility studies in Northern Ireland. Why not?

The Government are taking powers to bring in time limits. We all recognise that this is a new move, that there would be complications and that all sorts of arrangements and preparations would have to be made, but, if there is any good will and any real intention to implement those powers, surely the Minister should tell us that he will start a feasibility study, and tell us something about the time scale. If that is done, we can look forward to the implementation of these powers and to rapid progress in reducing the lengthy periods of remand in Northern Ireland, which are deplored by both sides of the House and by every party.

Mr. Scott: I must utter some sounds of disappointment, because what I had hoped was an earnest of good intent and a move in the right direction, albeit modest, has not been welcomed. I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) for being generous in the reception that he gave the new clause. The measure is a step in the right direction. I hope that it will be possible to have time limits, but they should be considered against the background that I outlined and the constraints that will continue to exist for some time in Northern Ireland.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), echoed by others, queried the use of the negative form of approval of the regulations that will be made under the new clause. The regulations will set time limits. There will be exactly the same procedure as will obtain in England

[Mr. Scott]

and Wales. We sought to follow as closely as possible the procedures under the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, which applies to England and Wales. The regulations under that Act will be introduced for England and Wales, when their pilot schemes have been carried through and evaluated, under the negative procedure. We thought it right to follow that procedure in Northern Ireland.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: If the Minister had put in his new clause a power, by negative procedure regulations, to apply the same time limits in Northern Ireland as in England and Wales, I certainly would not have raised that point.

Mr. Scott: It would be unrealistic to imagine that in the circumstances of Northern Ireland, with the complexity and seriousness of the cases that must be prepared for trial, we could set the same time limits that might apply in England and Wales. I should be surprised if it is possible to introduce time limits that are common across the whole of the jurisdiction in England and Wales. It may well be necessary to apply different time limits to different parts of the jurisdiction — for example, the Metropolitan police area has particular problems with delays in coming to trial and may require different limits from those set elsewhere in England and Wales. By choosing the negative procedure we are following what is happening in England and Wales.

There is much interest, of course, in what time limits might eventually be set. It is much too early to give any precise indication. We have to establish how long, on average, the various preliminary stages take and then decide what limits would maintain a degree of pressure on the system so that it operated without undue delays, without creating any unreasonable constraints on the system. The cases about which we are talking are, by definition, both serious and complicated. Any limits will certainly have to be longer than those applied in the pilot area of England and Wales and eventually introduced under regulation there.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister recall that in reply to a question in 1984 he said that the average time taken for cases to come to trial was 322 days? Surely it is possible to give contemporary figures to show whether that number has increased or decreased. What does the Minister regard as a reasonable time?

Mr. Scott: I was about to turn to the latest available figures on delays in coming to trial to show where we are now. In Northern Ireland, in the first six months of 1986, the average waiting time between remand and committal in scheduled cases was about 33 weeks, and the average time between committal and trial was 27 weeks, so we are talking of about 60 weeks in all between remand and cases coming to trial. The present position is unsatisfactory to a considerable degree.

As I said, as a result of the measures that I outlined in my written answer in December 1985, and the pressure that we are keeping up to reduce delays in cases coming to trial—all the prosecuting authorities, the police, the court service and the courts are involved—the next 12 to 18 months will see a substantial reduction in that figure. If we were to follow the proposal of the right hon. Member for South Down and set firm times for the various stages, we would find that they would swiftly be overtaken by the improvements that are likely to take place in any case during that period.

I shall deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). We are not running pilot schemes in Northern Ireland but, because it is a small jurisdiction, we are able, by monitoring the progress of the various cases through the courts, to have, in effect, the same ability to evaluate what is happening as the pilot schemes will give us in England and Wales. We shall look carefully at our measures to monitor and evaluate the progress of these cases through the courts of Northern Ireland. We shall obviously carefully follow the experiences of England and Wales under the pilot schemes. I hope that, in due course, we will be able to introduce regulations.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. Do the Government recognise that if we can cut the waiting time there will be a tremendous spin-off, by cutting overcrowding in prisons in Northern Ireland? If only we have a policy that seeks to cut the waiting time considerably, big advantages will flow from it.

Mr. Scott: That is true. What is more, it is in the interests of justice that the delay should be reduced. Not everyone who is remanded for lengthy periods is found guilty by the courts. Obviously, we do not want people who eventually are found not guilty by the courts to be detained for lengthy periods of remand.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Where are the main difficulties? Does the RUC require more investigating staff, and should they be provided, or is the obstacle in the judicial process, in the courts? If there is a shortage of personnel in any respect, is anything being done to make good that shortage?

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the written answer that I provided for the Committee. It referred to the 13 steps being taken by the different agencies that have some influence and responsibility in these matters. In a sense, by definition, this reflects the sorts of problems that we were trying to overcome.

There remains the right of defendants to choose their counsel. There are a small number of defence counsel in Northern Ireland who have acquired formidable reputations. Often defendants are prepared to wait long periods and spend that time on remand in order to acquire their services. I believe that on the prosecution side we have already taken substantial steps, and the effects will begin to flow through the system in the coming months.

I believe that it will be right in due course to introduce regulations to give effect to these measures. We need more experience of our monitoring exercise to see how the England and Wales experiment turns out.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Reference has been made to England and Wales, but I have some experience from a constituency case. Is there not something to be said for looking at Scottish law in this narrow respect?

5 pm

Mr. Scott: We have looked at the Scottish experience. At the end of 110 days, people in Scotland are released and regarded as acquitted by the courts. In dealing with the serious terrorist cases that we are talking about, the result of such action would be very dangerous men being released back on to the streets to cause more murder and

mayhem. We must consider the special circumstances of Northern Ireland and introduce measures that will reflect its needs, while keeping up the pressure to reduce what I freely accept causes widespread concern right across the community in Northern Ireland.

I hope the House will accept that in introducing the new clause I am giving an earnest of the Government's commitment to reducing those delays, and in due course —although I cannot say when—being able to introduce the regulations.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 28.

Division No. 137] **[5 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude, and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

NOES

Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Heffer, Eric S.
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Livsey, Richard
Madden, Max
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Nellist, David
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. Seamus Mallon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 2

CERTIFYING OUT

'In Part I of Schedule 4 to the 1978 Act there shall be inserted before "under" in Note 2 the words "triable summarily or an offence for which no sentence of imprisonment exceeding five years may be imposed, or an offence.".'.—*[Mr. J. Enoch Powell.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 3—*Attorney General's Discretion*—

'In Part I of Schedule 4 to the 1978 Act there shall be added after Note 4 the following note—

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

> "5. For the avoidance of doubt it is declared that the Attorney General may, in considering whether to give a certificate under Note 1 or Note 2 above, take into consideration, without prejudice to any other matters, any grounds on which it appears to thim that that offence could be tried otherwise than as a scheduled offence consistently with the interests of justice having regard to all the circumstances.".

New clause 7—*Attorney General's discretion to certify out*—

'In Part I of Schedule 4 to the 1978 Act there shall be added after Note 4 the following note:—

> "5. The Attorney General, in considering whether to give a certificate under Note 1 or Note 2 above, shall, without prejudice to any other relevant matters, have regard primarily to the seriousness of the alleged offences and the likelihood of any intimidation of a jury the effect of which would be to prejudice substantially the prospect of a just and fair trial.".'

Mr. Powell: With these three new clauses that the House is debating together we come to one of the most important aspects of the Bill and to a subject upon which there was considerable unity of feeling in the Standing Committee that considered the Bill. The three new clauses deal with two separate issues. I hope you will agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Question, That new clause 3 be read a Second time, should be put separately to the House. I understand that the official Opposition wish the Question on new clause 7 also to be put separately to the House.

Two different issues are raised by the three new clauses. Under the principal Act, a maximum list of scheduled offences is prescribed. However, offences that are so prescribed are not treated as scheduled offences if the Attorney-General performs an operation that has become slangily known as "certifying out." The effect of new cause 2 would be to increase the number of listed offences that the Attorney-General has the power to schedule out.

The other new clauses deal with the considerations that the Attorney-General may take into account in deciding whether or not to schedule out an offence, thus causing it to be tried otherwise than as a scheduled offence.

It would be a mistake to suppose that any of my hon. Friends or I wish there to be for any longer than may be absolutely necessary any divergence between the law and the process of law in Northern Ireland and that in the rest of the United Kingdom. In particular, we look forward to the day when jury trial will apply in the Province as it applies in the rest of the United Kingdom, but we find that there is a vicious circle into which any consideration of this matter is entrapped.

5.15 pm

Scheduled offences that are not certified out by the Attorney-General are tried by a judge sitting without a jury. It is claimed that that is the only practicable manner in which such offences, having a terrorist connotation, can be tried with any prospect of a fair trial and a just result. Unfortunately, however, there is no means of testing that assertion. Indeed, there has been no means of testing that assertion for the past 15 years or more. It is ironic that the principal reason for the establishment of the Diplock courts in the early 1970s was not anxiety about the intimidation of juries but the supposed risk of juries bringing in a perverse verdict. Therefore, the background to the institution of the trial of scheduled offences not certified out by a judge sitting without a jury is now relatively far back in experience and rests on a proposition that, by definition, it has been impossible to test in practice.

There is a widespread feeling, which is shared in many quarters, that it would not be impossible for scheduled offences, even if there were a terrorist connection, to be tried in a court where the judge sat with a jury, but in present circumstances that is bound to remain a proposition that cannot be tested. Therefore, we are locked into a theory from which we cannot escape by any form of demonstration. There can be no experiment with the validity of the basis for the Diplock courts.

In Committee there was a general wish that we should obtain for ourselves some means of experimenting. The methods of experimenting that were considered differed, but I do not think that I am misstating the matter when I say that the Committee was united in its desire to find some escape from the vicious circle and some means by which, tentatively and experimentally perhaps, we may discover whether we are still justified in assuming that no scheduled offence that has a terrorist connotation should be tried in an ordinary court sitting with a jury.

Therefore, we are anxious to enlarge the scope of certification out. To that end new clause 2 is directed. It extends the list of scheduled offences to which the power of the Attorney-General to certify out is applicable. It does so in accordance with the specific recommendation of paragraph 134 of the Baker report, which recommended:

> "all scheduled offences which are triable summarily or which carry a maximum sentence of imprisonment for five years or less should be capable of being certified out, ie, as not to be treated as scheduled offences."

That is the simple and limited object and effect of new clause 2. I hope that it will commend itself not only to the House but to the Government, bearing as it does the recommendation of the Baker report, which it has been the anxiety of my hon. Friends and myself as closely as possible to regard as the standard to be applied in judging this legislation.

The mere certifying out of offences by the Attorney-General does not enable us to judge the continuing validity of the argument for the maintenance of the Diplock courts as long as certification out is limited, as it is at present. It is our understanding—I think this was made clear in Committee — that the Attorney-General in practice certifies out only where he is satisfied that there is no terrorist connection or connotation in the offence. For example, in the case of murder, if he is satisfied that the motives were domestic, he regards it as within his scope to certify out that particular offence so that it is not tried as a scheduled offence. However, we were led to suppose that the Attorney-General has regarded himself as, in effect, limited in the exercise of his certifying out power to removing from the Diplock courts cases where there is no reasonable ground for supposing a terrorist connotation or purpose in the offence.

Obviously if that continues to be the rule applied by the Attorney-General, although it is nowhere prescribed in the legislation, we shall never have any evidence or means of saying, "Here is a scheduled offence which is terrorist in connotation. It has been proved possible in practice to try it by an ordinary court with a jury. Therefore, we are free from the automatic assumption that a scheduled offence not certified out on the present rule automatically and for ever must be tried without a jury."

Therefore new clause 3 and, in a different manner, new clause 7 open the door of experiment to differing degrees. The door is opened more widely by new clause 7 than by new clause 3 because, in the nature of this type of experiment, if we are going to engage in it at all, all we need to do is to give an indication to the Attorney-General that, in the exercise of his discretion, on the basis of all the facts put before him, he is free, if he so decides, to certify out a scheduled offence notwithstanding the fact that there are terrorist or paramilitary overtones to that offence. It is in no way a direction that he should do so, but it leaves the consideration open so that he can take that into account. He would be free to take into account — indeed, he would need to take into account — any reasons there might be for supposing that in that particular case a fair trial was possible in the ordinary courts.

The material submitted to the Attorney-General, as it was explained to the Committee, already contains a far-reaching indication as to the exercise of the Attorney-General's discretion if he is given this additional hint. Of course, he has the power already and, as I understand it, there is no restriction at the moment upon his power to certify out. There is no specification of the grounds on which he must or must not certify out. Therefore, we are underlining the fact that there is no need for the certifying out power to be limited to cases where no terrorist connotation can possibly exist.

In short, in the clause we are inviting the possibility of experimental certifying out being explored, however tentatively, by the Attorney-General in the exercise of his responsibilities.

New clause 3 is a tentative hint. It may be that it is best to start such an experiment tentatively and, therefore, it may well be that new clause 3, as my hon. Friends and I believe, is a wiser approach than new clause 7. That will be a matter for debate. However, the purpose is the same, and I believe that it is a purpose which was felt strongly not only in Committee but quite widely in Northern Ireland and among persons of different political persuasions.

If we can, we would like to find a gradual escape, if it has to be gradual, from a system of justice that is not comparable to that which prevails elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It is for that purpose that, in due course, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall invite the House to consider that new clause 3 be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I can now deal with the point raised by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) as to whether it would be possible to have separate Divisions on new clause 3 and new clause 7. Consideration has been given to that matter and the Chair would be prepared to allow a separate Division on one or other of those new clauses, but not on both. The House might like to consider the matter as the debate proceeds.

Mr. Archer: I am grateful for that indication, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps during the debate there can be consultation through what are sometimes known as the usual channels about how that matter should be dealt with.

At the outset, I welcome the Attorney-General back to the Chamber, and particularly to this debate.

As the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has just said, all the new clauses that are the subject of this debate are attempts to find a way to bring about a gradual restoration of normal jury trial in Northern Ireland. It was in 1972 that the Diplock commission recommended the suspension of jury trial for what it called terrorist offences. It argued that there may have been miscarriages of justice in trials for alleged paramilitary activities, and it said that it was concerned not at the prospect of perverse convictions—it thought that an effective judge would be able to prevent that—but at the prospect of perverse acquittals. The recommendations were avowedly intended to increase the conviction rate.

That requires two comments at the outset. First, whether the interests of justice require an increase in the conviction rate must depend on whether it was guilty people who were being acquitted. What is a perverse acquittal is a subjective judgment. Secondly, it makes no contribution to reducing paramilitary activity or to protecting people from violence to convict the wrong people.

The Diplock commission produced no evidence that there were too many acquittals and, so far as I am aware, no one has shed any further light on whether there are, or were, too many acquittals, except to make assertions and counter-assertions. The Diplock commission said that too few people were being convicted and it went on to prescribe two reasons for that alleged situation. Its major argument, as the right hon. Member for South Down has reminded us, was that juries were prejudiced. One might have thought that prejudiced juries would sometimes be led into perverse convictions, as well as perverse acquittals, but the commission said that it was not troubled about that. It was concerned that prejudiced juries would let out those who should have been convicted.

At that time there was a property qualification for jury service and juries were predominantly Protestant. Therefore, all the fuss was about the danger of Protestant juries acquitting Protestant paramilitaries. Of course, since the Juries (Northern Ireland) Order 1979, any jury is likely to include members of both traditions. If jury trial were extended now, it is possible that there would be an undue number of jury disagreements. That is something that we have to see. It is something about which we can only speculate at the moment. The danger that most influenced the Diplock commission clearly no longer exists.

The commission said that juries might be being intimidated. It produced no evidence, but what is always said is that there is no record of people complaining that they are intimidated—"They wouldn't, would they?" If people are frightened, they will not go around announcing why they are frightened. That invites two comments. First, we sometimes speak as if, when we have explained why there are no complaints of intimidation, we have produced a positive reason for believing that there is intimidation. Explaining the absence of evidence is not equivalent to producing the evidence. At best, it is neutral. As there is some obligation on those who wish to base their arguments on the existence of intimidation to establish that it really exists, that burden of proof remains undischarged.

5.30 pm

Secondly, it is not true that jurors never complain when they are intimidated. There are many cases on record, certainly on this side of the water—for example, in the Central Criminal Court—when jurors have reported to a judge attempts to intimidate them. If there are no similar

[Mr. Archer]

cases in Northern Ireland, that must be some reason for believing that intimidation is not, and was not, taking place.

Indeed, we have a test even now as to whether there is likely to be intimidation if jury trial is restored. We know that there are cases being heard for offences which are not in the schedule and for which Diplock trial is not prescribed, but which have paramilitary connotations—cases of corruption, fraud and demanding with menaces, which relate to the methods by which some paramilitary organisations finance their activities.

If cases in which paramilitary organisations were interested immediately attracted intimidation, we would expect to hear of intimidation in those trials. In fact, we hear no such thing. Of course, I accept that that is not conclusive. What matters is whether jurors will perceive themselves to be intimidated. They have to go back from the court and live in local communities. That is why we cannot simply return to jury trial at a stroke. The House is probably agreed on that. However, we can return gradually, as the right hon. Member for South Down said.

As we take each step, we can monitor the consequences and see whether juries are perverse or whether they complain of being threatened. As the right hon. Gentleman reminded us, the problem at present is that once we say that we are suspending jury trial because there is a danger of intimidation, we have no means of knowing whether there would have been intimidation if we had not suspended jury trial. We can learn that only if we return a step at a time. Until we break out of the circle, we have no means of knowing what the consequences would be if we broke out of the circle. Thus, we are exploring how we can begin the way back.

We agree with the right hon. Member for South Down. We can go back at least as far as the recommendation of Sir George Baker. The Diplock offences are not defined by reference to the characteristics of any specific case, and we accept that they could not be. There could not easily be a separate investigation in each case. Those offences are defined by reference to the statutory provisions that created them or to the common law name that has been attached to them. No doubt they are those categories of offences that were thought to be most frequently committed by those engaged in paramilitary activities, but even the authors of the original Act in 1973 recognised that they do not always have a connection with terrorism.

We are all familiar with the study by Mr. Dermott Walsh into people convicted under the Diplock procedure, in which 40 per cent. had no observable connection with terrorism. We know that the majority of the cases related to robbery aggravated by the use of real or imitation weapons. Many of those offences are committed, not for political reasons, but out of simple old-fashioned greed. When the category of offences that were capable of being certified out by the Attorney-General was extended in January 1986, that category was not included, although it was the category in which there was most obviously a problem.

Even if an offence is connected with paramilitary activities, it does not follow that it is appropriate to apply to it all the provisions relating to scheduled offences. So it was thought that someone should have the power to consider, in relation to each specific case, whether those provisions should apply — hence the power of the Attorney-General to certify out in those cases.

The new clauses are about two things, as the right hon. Member for South Down said. New clause 2 provides that that power to certify out should be extended, at least to the extent recommended by Sir George Baker. We would argue that the Baker recommendations are not the ultimate in our ambitions, but anything less than Baker is totally unacceptable and new clause 2 seems to be the minimalist position that would begin the road back.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I am following the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument, and concur with most of it. On reflection, does he not accept that it might have been an unnecessary imputation on the integrity of a jury that happened to be made up of householders that they would automatically discriminate against one religion because they were of another? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that the real reason given to us in the early days for the abolition of jury trials was not intimidation of juries but intimidation of witnesses? That is not a reason for keeping the whole category. In other words, I agree with what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is saying, but I should like to pinpoint the fact that the only evidence of intimidation was intimidation of witnesses.

Mr. Archer: The hon. Gentleman is right. There is a great deal in the Diplock report about the intimidation of witnesses, but it does not seem to me that that problem is somehow minimised if one abolishes jury trial. One needs witnesses, whether one has a jury or not. In so far as the argument rests on that, as the hon. Gentleman properly pointed out, that is not a reason for not returning to jury trial.

In many ways, new clauses 3 and 7 are to the same effect. The burden is that when the Attorney-General is called on to exercise his discretion on whether to certify out he should consider, not only whether the case has paramilitary connections, but whether, even if it has, the reasons that induced the authors of the Act to provide for trial without jury operate in that case. Is there a reason to fear intimidation of jurors or perhaps witnesses? Is there a reason to think that the jury would be perverse?

New clause 3 would give the Attorney-General a discretion, if it does nitt already exist, to take those matters into account. As the right hon. Member for South Down said, new clause 7 says that the Attorney-General must take those matters into account. We say that at least he should take them into account because they are clearly relevant to the decision that he has to make, but let me say at once that I do not feel so strongly on that that I would insist on a Division on new clause 7 to the exclusion of new clause 3. Perhaps we can discuss that.

The issue is simple. If the old, valued, venerated right to trial by jury, which generations of our forebears have believed to be an essential bulwark of personal freedom, is to be denied to certain defendants in Northern Ireland, that denial requires to be justified by specific reasons. Once that is settled, if it is to be denied in a particular case, it should be a case to which those specific reasons apply.

There are two very good grounds for trying to find a way back towards jury trial in Northern Ireland—not only that it is fair and in the interests of justice, but that

without it the Diplock procedure is more likely to alienate than to attract or inspire confidence in the legal system. It is less rather than more likely to bring terrorists to justice.

Mr. Alton: I was glad to hear the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) say that he would not necessarily press new clause 7 to a Division. In the spirit of gradualism referred to by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), and because of the need to return to as normal a system as possible, given the circumstances, in Northern Ireland, new clause 3 probably goes sufficiently far enough at this stage.

I want briefly to address my remarks to new clause 2. Sir George Baker's report has been referred to. Paragraph 136 of the report gives the most compelling reasons why we should follow the course advocated by the right hon. Member for South Down in new clause 2. Paragraph 136 states:

"More importantly many witnesses have told me of robberies and aggravated burglaries which had no connection or certainly no apparent connection with terrorism or terrorists or paramilitary organisations but because 'a firearm, imitation firearm or weapon of offence was used to commit the offence' became scheduled and were not capable of being certified out."

If we can remove as many cases as possible from those categories to enable normal circumstances to apply, so much the better.

The Diplock courts in Northern Ireland at the moment deal only with scheduled offences—offences associated with terrorism as defined in schedule 4 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. There is widespread concern in the House and outside that the schedule is far too wide, in that offences committed by persons who are not connected with terrorism may nevertheless fall within the remit of the schedule. I understand that it was alleged in a recent study undertaken by the Cobden trust that no fewer than 40 per cent. of those tried by the Diplock courts had no apparent connections with terrorism. Therefore, I believe that it should be possible to deschedule cases that have no apparent connection with serious terrorist offences, to make them triable by a jury. I also believe that the list of scheduled offences should regularly and rigorously be examined with a view to excluding as many offences as possible. I hope that the Attorney-General will be able to say something about that possibility.

In relation to every scheduled offence, irrespective of where it appears in the schedule, the prosecuting authority should have a duty to consider whether the offence should be descheduled, and the descheduling should occur wherever possible. Furthermore, the accused should have the right to apply to the court to have his individual case descheduled on the ground that it is not connected with terrorism. That could take place either at the first appearance before a magistrate or in any subsequent appearance. The accused would have the right of appeal to the High Court.

Through the introduction of such safeguards, and perhaps as a result of the introduction of a panel of three judges, reductions in the size of trials, reductions in the delays before suspects are brought to trial and a statutory limit to remands in custody, many of the anxieties felt by hon. Members about the use of the Diplock courts can be set to one side. We all accept that there must be a gradual approach, and the right hon. Member for South Down phrased his remarks in terms that ought to commend themselves to hon. Members on both sides of the House. If there is a Division, I intend to follow up the support that I have given to the right hon. Gentleman in adding my name to the new clause by joining him in the Lobby.

Ms. Clare Short: The main factor that brings the system of criminal justice in Northern Ireland into disrepute is that there are so many trials without juries. We had an important and useful discussion about that issue in Committee. We understand that current Government practice is never to certify out an offence in which there is any suggestion of terrorist involvement. That point was made very clear to the Committee.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers) *indicated dissent.*

Ms. Short: I notice that the Attorney-General is shaking his head. I hope that he will give us further clarification about that.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said that that was a self-defeating strategy. It means that so long as anyone is willing to engage in any kind of terrorist activity in Northern Ireland we will always have trials without juries. We are not on a path that will take us back to full jury trial.

My understanding, like that of the right hon. Member for South Down, is that the Government are not required, within the current powers to certify out, always to ensure that if there is any terrorist connection there should not be a jury trial. I very much hope that the Government—whose representative is not listening to my brief remarks—in responding to the new clause will at the very least, even if they do not accept the new clause, agree to some changes in the guidelines under which they currently operate. I hope that they will try to certify out initially—and I do not mind if the process is gradual in the first phase—some of those offences in which there is thought to be a terrorist connection to see whether a valid jury trial can take place.

It seems to me and to all people of common sense that it is in the interests of everyone, including those who have been charged with terrorist offences, that they should be tried by a jury. The current practice brings the system of criminal justice in Northern Ireland into massive disrepute among the nationalist community. I cannot remember the figure, but a shocking proportion of the people in that community have no confidence or faith in the criminal justice system at the moment.

We were told in Committee that the Government will never certify out any case where there is any suggestion of terrorist involvement. We are asking for a change in those guidelines. We want the Government to try to certify out in certain cases as part of the progress towards a return to jury trial. I welcome the fact that the Attorney-General has been shaking his head, but we were told otherwise in Committee. I hope that he has better news for us today.

5.45 pm

The Attorney-General: I am very grateful to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) for his comments. We always consider the opinions and views of the right hon. and learned Gentleman with great care, especially on legal matters. His reputation as Solicitor-General will be remembered and respected for a long time by all hon. Members.

As a very new Solicitor-General I was present during the passage of the Northern Ireland (Emergency

[The Attorney-General]

Provisions) Bill in 1973 and I spoke in the debate. After that I went to Belfast and spent a long time with the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland working out the procedure that we would adopt. It is interesting that the Baker report, in paragraph 139, emphatically rejects the criteria that would be set out. I want to attempt to assist the House with one or two examples.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has resumed his championship—which he did so well in Committee—of the Baker report and he has challenged me to explain why the scheduled offences that are triable summarily or have a maximum penalty of five years should not be made capable of being certified out. I hope that I shall not bore the House, but I must describe those cases that are still left with that ban. There are very few. In summary, the exceptions are breach of the exclusion order; contributions towards acts of terrorism; withholding information about acts of terrorism; offences under proscribed organisations legislation; unlawful collection of information; training in use of firearms or explosives; offences under the Protection of Person and Property Act (Northern Ireland) 1969; making and possessing a petrol bomb; obtaining property by deception, but only where nuclear material is involved; escaping from detention; clothing, hoods, masks and things of that sort. The view that I and the Government have taken is that those offences are likely to be committed only by terrorists. It would be wrong to extend my discretion to those when in practice I would be totally unable to exercise that discretion.

In a moment we will debate the criteria that I used in deciding whether to exercise discretion. I hope to persuade the House that if a particular case is "connected with the emergency", that is sufficient to justify a decision by me not to exercise discretion. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) referred to "any suggestion of terrorist involvement". The procedure is nothing like as remote as that. If a case is "connected with the emergency", there is a real risk—and this repeats the argument that has continued since 1973 — that the outcome of any jury trial would be affected either by intimidation or by the juror's fear of subsequent retribution.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West mentioned perceived intimidation. In the unhappily divided society of Northern Ireland, it is also possible that jurors trying such cases may be swayed by sympathy with or opposition to the underlying aims of those in the dock to return perverse verdicts. It would be to abandon common sense and, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, it could lead to many hung juries.

In the circumstances of Northern Ireland, those risks apply generally to any terrorist-related trial. If I were given discretion to certify out such offences, I would have to certify out cases which I simply cannot conceive would be covered by new clause 2. It is better that the mode of trial should be determined automatically on objective criteria by reference to the offence. My discretion to certify out mitigates the rigour of that approach and allows some cases involving scheduled offences to go for trial by jury, but my judgment is essentially subjective, and if we placed too much emphasis on it I might be put in an impossible position.

New clauses 3 and 7 address the basis on which I exercise the discretion conferred on me by schedule 4. I remind the House that the Government are firmly committed to the principle of trial by jury, and we look forward to the day when it will be possible to restore full jury trials in Northern Ireland. But, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman conceded, that time has not yet arrived. There remains a clear risk that jury trials involving some offences in Northern Ireland would not result in true verdicts, either because of intimidation or because of prejudice leading to a perverse verdict. That is the justification for the Diplock court procedure.

The issue contained in the new clauses is the basis upon which it should be decided that one person is tried by a jury while another is tried in a Diplock court. The Government's firm view is that the decision should rest as far as possible on objective grounds and that it should be determined not by reference to the offender but by the nature of the offence. That avoids any requirement for what could be a prejudicial decision, based on a subjective assessment, that a case should go for trial before a judge sitting without a jury. Just as Sir John Junor frequently does in his column in the *Sunday Express*, comparisons will be made between one sentence and another. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman with his legal experience will realise, until one knows all the facts it is difficult to compare one sentence with another and to criticise them.

We recognise that that approach has limitations. That is why we have the fallback of the 1978 Act, which provides that I may certify some cases for jury trial. That exercise must rest on a subjective assessment, but at least the decision will not be prejudicial. For example, when a defendant appears in an ordinary Crown court, it will be because I have specifically decided that the offence has no terrorist connections. It could be summed up in a sentence —although I do not have the phrase exactly right—by saying that the offence should be causally, not coincidentally, connected with terrorism.

In the light of the Baker report, Parliament has already significantly extended the scope of my discretion to certify out. I assure the House that I exercise those responsibilities with great care, just as the right hon. and learned Gentleman did while in office. I have maintained the practice of considering every case that is capable of being certified out, and I have tried to do so within 24 hours, because the granting of immediate bail may rest on my decision. I do so on the basis of a note about each case which has been prepared, with equal care, by the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland. The figures given by my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor in the other place a short time ago show that, during the past five years, I considered 2,685 applications for certification and that I certified out 1,865 of those cases, which represents well over two thirds. That is a fairly large proportion, and it has come about because I receive the most carefully prepared notes on each case from someone of the rank of at least assistant director in the Northern Ireland Director's office. We do not rely on gossip or talk from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. We need hard evidence before we refuse to certify out.

I suppose that I could consider whether, in all the circumstances, any risk would be involved in sending a case for trial by jury. I doubt whether there is a distinction between asking, "Will there be a fair trial", and the causal connection approach. In considering whether a case is connected with the emergency, I take account of the

likelihood that such cases, if sent for trial by jury, would be affected by intimidation or by the jurors' fear of subsequent retribution and the possibility of a perverse verdict. That is why we have the Diplock courts. In the circumstances of Northern Ireland, those risks apply generally to any terrorist-related trial. So, when deciding to issue a certificate for a case, I must decide whether, if I authorised a jury trial, it would be likely to result in a miscarriage of justice for those reasons. It would be wrong to apply a specific criterion along those lines, whether on the face of the legislation or not, because it would suggest that there should be specific evidence of a risk of a miscarriage of justice.

I have argued that, in the circumstances of Northern Ireland, such a risk exists in a general sense, regardless of the precise circumstances of each case. It would not be in the interests of justice or of the community to tip the balance towards jury trials simply because there may be no measurable risk of a miscarriage of justice in a case.

Those figures are available. I am sure that the House will accept my assurance that when I take decisions I am very well informed and do so with the greatest care.

Ms. Clare Short: The figures could be read in two ways. Either the Attorney-General carefully allows the jury trial in the maximum number of cases—1,865 out of 2,685—or the present line is drawn badly and the Attorney-General must carry out much unnecessary, exhausting, detailed work when instead he should amend the procedures so that he need not spend so much time certifying out so many cases.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Lady is saying that I should delegate part of it——

Ms. Clare Short: No.

The Attorney-General: I do not see how else we can do it while we have scheduled offences.

I said that I would give two or three examples. A terrorist, or illegally held, gun may be used by a man to murder his wife. That was an example given in the Baker report. We do not prosecute for possession of the weapon, which would be a scheduled offence, because it has been a long tradition in the Province that murder always stands by itself and is not aligned with other counts. If a police officer or a soldier used excessive force against a citizen —let us take the bad example of going as far as beating him up — and that citizen, purely in self-defence, punched the soldier to protect himself, I would certify out. If he over-reacted and produced a knife or an iron bar, it may be different, but we consider the matter as sympathetically as possible, as the figures show.

This has been a useful debate, but this is not the moment to move so far in the direction suggested by the right hon. Member for South Down.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 189.

Division No. 138] **[8 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Begg, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Mont'g'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James A.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
McCusker, Harold
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Bitten, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon

Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Irving, Charles
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 3

Attorney General's Discretion

'In Part I of Schedule 4 to the 1978 Act there shall be added after Note 4 the following Note—

"5. For the avoidance of doubt it is declared that the Attorney General may, in considering whether to give a certificate under Note 1 or Note 2 above, take into consideration, without prejudice to any other matters, any grounds on which it appears to him that that offence could be tried otherwise than as a scheduled offence consistently with the interests of justice having regard to all the circumstances."'. — *[Mr. Molyneaux.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 188.

Division No. 139] **[6.12 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James A.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
McCusker, Harold
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive

Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dykes, Hugh
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Irving, Charles
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 5

The Use of Lethal Force

'After section 20(9) of the 1978 Act there shall be inserted the following—

"(10)*(a)* In the exercise of the duties and powers conferred on them by this Act, constables and members of Her Majesty's forces may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, or in effecting or assisting in lawful arrest of offenders or of persons unlawfully at large.

(b) For the purposes of *(a)* above, it shall not be deemed reasonable to use lethal force unless:

(i) the person using it reasonably apprehends immediate death or serious injury to himself or another person, and the use of such force is necessary in the circumstances to prevent such death or injury; or

(ii) the use of such force as is necessary to achieve the lawful apprehension of a person whom the person using such force has reasonable cause to believe poses a threat of imminent death or serious injury to himself or another person if not apprehended.

(c) In *(b)* above, 'lethal force' shall mean such force as is intended or likely in the circumstances to cause death or serious injury."'.—[*Mr. Archer.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Archer: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is an attempt to grapple with a problem which has occasioned a great deal of discussion in the courts, political circles and academic literature. We had an enlightening debate in Committee which I found valuable and which helped to clear my mind. We are all in agreement that the rule of law applies to Government and Government alike. We believe that the law should be enforced, but that those who enforce it should themselves carefully observe the limitations on their powers. Those who enforce the law cannot be allowed to destroy confidence in the legal system and the courts and they cannot be permitted to place at risk the values which the law exists to protect. So far, we are all in agreement, but differences begin at the next stage.

Should the rules which are applicable to the security forces in Northern Ireland simply be rules which are applicable to the rest of the population so that the security

[Mr. Archer]

forces have no obligations and no exemptions which are not shared by the rest of us, or do the powers with which they are invested, the duties which we impose on them and the risks which they are called on to take require some different or more precise formulation?

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for pointing out the enlightening article on the use of deadly force by Mr. R. J. Spjut in "Public Law" for the spring of 1986. He sets out the existing position. Existing law would provide a defence to a prosecution for the use of lethal force if it were applied in reasonable self-defence, the defence of others or to apprehend a person reasonably suspected of having committed an arrestable offence or if it was to prevent the commission of a crime or the escape of an offender unlawfully at large.

That does not end our problems; it raises numerous questions both about what the law now is and what it should be. There is what has been called the proportionality principle, and the report to the Criminal Code Commission expressed it in this way:

"We take one great principle of the common law to be that, though it sanctions the defence of a man's person, liberty and property against illegal violence, and permits the use of force to prevent crimes, to preserve the public peace, and to bring offenders to justice, yet all this is subject to the restriction that the force used is necessary; that is, that the mischief sought to be prevented could not be prevented by less violent means; and that the mischief done, or which might reasonably be anticipated from the force used, is not disproportioned to the injury or mischief which it is intended to prevent."

That principle becomes important when the force that is used is sought to be justified by the necessity of preventing the escape of a fugitive. What crimes may he commit if he escapes, and what is the likelihood of his committing them? How immediate should those consequences be before lethal force is justified? What degree of force would be justified to prevent them? Without attempting to review all that has been said on the subject, the law as it appears from the cases is by no means clear.

We do not even know what instructions are given to members of the forces. The Ministry of Defence declined to publish the instructions on the famous yellow card, although it is not clear in what way that information would assist law breakers. Indeed, what purports to be the contents of the yellow card have been published from time to time. Mr. Spjut has alleged that they include instructions that there must be no firing of shots to warn or to wound and that any shots must be only to kill. There may be reasons for that, but if that is true it is somewhat surprising.

In Committee we debated whether the area where an incident took place could ever be a relevant consideration. I remember the forceful, cogent remarks of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) on the subject and I understand the indignation of those who believe that the area where they live might be thought to be an area where lethal force could be justified, whereas other areas would not be. That would be an offensive suggestion to those concerned.

We find little help from Sir George Baker, who considered the problem in paragraphs 401 to 403, but concluded that the matter was not within his terms of reference. I do not propose to repeat the debate that took place in Committee, but it is important that the House should direct its mind to these questions and give considered answers, and that those answers should be embodied in legislation.

That is necessary for three reasons. First, it is necessary in fairness to members of the security forces who should not be left in doubt about the extent of their powers and obligations. Often they must take decisions at a moment's notice on inadequate information and they should not have those difficulties multiplied by uncertainty about the options open to them. Secondly, it is important for the protection of the public. Those in an area of potential risk should be protected by clear provisions of which they and everyone else is aware. Thirdly, it is important to justify public confidence in the rule of law which has sometimes been endangered by events, as was made clear in the debate in Committee. We accepted the criticisms of our amendment in Committee. In drafting this new clause we have sought to take account of those criticisms. I shall not delay the House by going through its provisions in detail, but even if someone were to say, at this late stage, "We believe that these powers and obligations should be made specific and that account should be taken of the arguments which were used in Committee, but we do not agree with the precise way in which you have set them out in this new clause", I would not seek to go to the stake for this clause rather than any other.

It is vital that the House directs its mind to these questions because they cannot be left at large. The answers that the House chooses to give should be embodied in legislation.

6.30 pm

Mr. Maginnis: I am surprised that the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) should move such a naive clause. He has clearly demonstrated that he does not fully understand the position in which members of the security forces find themselves when facing dedicated armed terrorists whose single objective is to kill and maim members of the security forces and the civilian population with whom they disagree. The wording of the new clause is so naive that it verges on being insulting to those who must face armed terrorists day in and day out.

I shall describe a situation with which I am quite familiar. Let us suppose that members of an army patrol stop a car in the middle of the night and realise that three armed terrorists are getting out of it. They must quickly decide what level of force should be used to apprehend those terrorists. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, that is laid down in the yellow card. They will use the minimum force which is necessary to effect an arrest. This new clause would bind them in their action, and that is especially illustrated in subsection 10*(b)*(ii):

"the use of such force as is necessary to achieve the lawful apprehension of a person whom the person using such force has reasonable cause to believe poses a threat of imminent death or serious injury to himself or another person."

Does that mean that a soldier must wait until he can decide whether a person carrying a gun will run away or turn round and open fire on him? That subsection would pose that question in the mind of a member of the security forces. It is not something with which we should bind our soldiers or policemen.

What does "threat of imminent death" mean? If I see a terrorist with a gun, I know that he intends death to members of the security forces or innocent civilians. What is "imminent death"? Is it within the next five minutes, the

next hour or the next week? I have a strange feeling that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would suggest that it is not a period within the next week or couple of weeks, but if you or I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were likely to be the victim of a terrorist within the next week or two you and I would consider that death was imminent.

Mr. Archer: I welcome the hon. Gentleman back into our counsels. However, if we are debating which of us is the more naive, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how the formulae in the new clause differ from the decisions which members of the security forces have to make under the present law?

Mr. Maginnis: When members of the security forces fire their weapons—the right hon. and learned Gentleman hinted at this—they intend to kill the person at whom they are firing. They do not fire them to warn or injure. There is good reason why that should be the case. A weapon is designed to kill the enemy. If it is used in any other way, it becomes a danger to the person using it, those, if they are members of an Army patrol, with whom the person firing it is patrolling, and to members of the public.

To draw up this strange criterion that we must expect our soldiers to use force which is not lethal in a situation such as is outlined in the new clause is to ask them to endanger themselves and other members of the public.

Mr. Mallon: As to what the hon. Gentleman said about the wording of the clause, is he saying that, in circumstances where these conditions do not apply, it would be right to use that lethal force? Either it should be constrained by the conditions laid down in the new clause, or, if it is not, it must surely be wrong to use lethal force. I am trying to establish whether that is what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Maginnis: I do not think that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) is in any doubt as to what I am saying. I am not suggesting that force, other than the minimal amount that is required to effect an arrest—I am talking about terrorists, as, I presume, the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West was—should be used.

The trouble with the new clause is that it clearly states that it is not reasonable to use lethal force unless it is believed that death is imminent. What is "imminent"? An armed terrorist who escapes will be back next week, the week after or some time in the foreseeable future. In such a situation death will be imminent for a member of the public.

It is wrong to try to define the basis on which soldiers should use maximum force. That would be disadvantageous, and I implore the House not to give any consideration to a means of tying the hands of the security forces in protecting themselves and members of the public.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). He appeared to define the new clause in terms of a member of the security forces being faced by an armed terrorist. In those circumstances, any member of the security forces would, under the new clause, be more than justified in using lethal force. Anyone faced with an armed terrorist has a reasonable apprehension of immediate death.

However, the new clause seeks to deal with the circumstances that arose in the McElhone and Jones case where McElhone, a completely innocent person, refused to stop when summoned to do so by a soldier. He saw the soldier's gun, was scared and ran away. Bang—he was shot like a rabbit. That is the situation with which we are trying to deal. McElhone was unarmed and there was no evidence that the soldier felt that he was under any threat at the time. There was no evidence that McElhone, if he had been known to the soldier, had been involved in any terrorist activity, and yet he was shot.

That is the situation with which the Standing Advisory Commission on Human rights was most concerned when it issued its press statement on the Bill. It said:

> "No opportunity is taken in the Bill to amend the law on the use of reasonable force as it applies to the use of firearms by the police and other members of the security forces. The circumstance in which resort may be had to the lawful use of firearms remains vague and unsatisfactory."

That was the situation after our debate in Committee. The Minister of State was prepared to leave the law as it was — vague and unsatisfactory. Therefore, Labour Members, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) in particular, sought to take up the argument of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and to introduce a clause which properly and carefully protected the security forces in the reasonable use of force, and lethal force if necessary, in all circumstances when they could reasonably apprehend that they, or people in the area, were likely to suffer serious injury or death from terrorist activity. We did not want to go back to the McElhone situation, which was unreal and unnecessary.

Ms. Clare Short: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) laid great stress on not liking the use of the word "imminent" in relation to violence from a terrorist? That suggests that he would support the armed forces shooting anyone known to be in possession of a weapon, whether they intended to use that weapon in one, two or six weeks. I cannot believe that he really intended that the armed forces should shoot whether or not there was any danger of an individual being harmed by that weapon. That was the import of his speech, and that is a licence to a shoot-to-kill policy.

Mr. McNamara: I accept my hon. Friend's point. I thought that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone went too far when he made that point. In retrospect, I do not think that he would have meant it to apply in such broad circumstances. Most of us here would consider it reasonable for a member of the security forces to shoot on seeing a person suspected of terrorism carrying a lethal weapon, in an area where there is a good deal of terrorism, if, after apprehension, the person ran away. But one could not shoot on the basis that Mr. X might or might not have a rifle in his house which might or might not be used on some occasion. If that is what the hon. Gentleman was saying, I am sure that no one would reasonably accept that as an interpretation of a proper use of lethal force under any circumstances.

Mr. Maginnis: I am not saying that.

Mr. McNamara: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has now qualified his position as that which I originally described as the circumstances in which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West drafted the new clause.

Mr. Maginnis: I want to make it clear that in the McElhone case, with which I am familiar in so far as I used to teach in the area where McElhone lived, the soldier was brought to trial having been charged with rashly and irresponsibly causing McElhone's death. He had acted outside the guidelines laid down for members of the security forces. In that case the court accepted that the soldier had reasonable grounds for suspecting that McElhone was a terrorist, and he was released. But in another case, which has not been quoted, a similar situation occurred and the soldier was found guilty of acting irresponsibly. He is now serving a sentence of imprisonment for that.

Therefore, the rules by which soldiers and other members of the security forces are guided are adequate and responsible. The civil law is adequate to deal with any member of the security forces who acts irresponsibly or maliciously outside the guidelines. My point was that I did not want this new clause, which would cloud, not clarify, the issue.

6.45 pm

Mr. McNamara: That was an interesting intervention. The two cases which the hon. Gentleman cited show the extent of the confusion over this important matter. It was said in the McElhone case that, because of the area in which the incident took place, one could reasonably accept that any person refusing to stop could be shot. It was, so to speak, bandit country—a matter to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West referred.

The hon. Gentleman has now accepted that he did not mean the extension of the case that he put forward. Secondly, he accepted that there must be a reasonable use of force in such instances. Accepting that there is uncertainty in the law, the logic would be to follow my right hon. and learned Friend's attempt to define the circumstances in which lethal force can be used.

Finally, let me deal with the question of the yellow card. When my right hon. and learned Friend said that the instruction was only to use aimed shots and that that therefore meant shots to kill, not warning shots or shots to wound, the Minister of State appeared to shake his head. In Committee we outlined what we understood to be the contents of the yellow card. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, it is difficult to understand why it is a classified document. Any citizen should be properly entitled to know the orders under which members of the security forces are acting in their proper role of seeking to apprehend terrorists. That is a matter of common sense civil liberties.

Therefore, if the Minister of State does not accept what my right hon. and learned Friend said, I hope that he will state his reasons. More importantly, when he has finished talking to the Secretary of State, I hope that he will not only deny what my right hon. and learned Friend said, but produce the yellow card so that the House and the country may know exactly the circumstances in which our people are operating.

Mr Mallon: First, I should like to commend the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) for trying to define the circumstances in which lethal force may be used. We must consider the other side of the coin because, in the absence of a clear definition, what will happen when the type of tragic situation that we have seen so often in Northern Ireland occurs?

The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned a case that occurred some time ago and I wish to mention another, that of a young man named John Patrick Cunningham from Armagh. He was educationally subnormal and unable to hear or speak. He was terrified of any stranger. He was shot dead because, naturally enough, he ran away when stopped. That is the type of incident that we must guard against. That person was not carrying guns, nor was he in a position to know what was happening, but he had no defence in those circumstances.

Frankly, I was astounded by the line of argument put forward by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). I do not believe that he meant to say what we interpreted him as saying. I interpreted his remarks as suggesting that in circumstances in which there was no cause for suspicion a person could be the victim of lethal force. That is a dangerous concept, and if it proves anything to us it proves the need clearly to define the circumstances in which force can be used. We must judge what the absence of such a clear definition means because, in the light of experience in Northern Ireland, there is a danger of abuse.

I wish to specify three incidents that occurred in Lurgan, in Armagh and in a hayshed in Ballyneary. The victims in those incidents are now known as the victims of the shoot-to-kill policy, otherwise known as the Stalker affair, otherwise known as the Sampson report. Those incidents would not have occurred had there been a clearly defined set of circumstances that laid down when force could be used.

In the three cases none of the people shot was carrying weapons. It is true that in the hayshed at Ballyneary there was an extremely old weapon. However, I believe that the Sampson-Stalker report will show that that weapon was inoperative and also that the RUC members who shot those young people knew that it was inoperative. In those three cases, no one was carrying guns but, not only that, the people involved, the victims, were under surveillance for a considerable period. That has already been proved as a result of the court case that has taken place.

What happens in the absence of guidelines? What are the wider implications and the effect on the community in the north of Ireland? The effect has been enormously bad. After five years, inquests have still not been held and no substantive report has been published. There is a large question mark in people's minds hanging over those incidents. What has been the effect on the police? Anyone who speaks to senior police officers will know that there has been a bad effect because it puts the good policeman who does his job properly in the same bracket as those who take short cuts and abuse their position. Moreover, we already know from one of the court cases that one of the constables who was charged was encouraged to commit perjury by one of his senior officers. That is bound to have a corrosive effect upon the police service.

It produced a lack of confidence in the process of justice which at that time could be quantified in the north of Ireland and which has left a dangerous residue. What about the effects on the career of an extremely good, able and professional man, John Stalker? What about the effect on the career of the coroner who, rather than continue the charade that was presented to him and proceed with an inquest on the basis of information that was palpably untrue, resigned his position. Such are the effects of the absence of clear guidelines. We must prevent such cases from ever happening again.

We can prevent such incidents only by closing the loopholes. The only way that that can be done is by clearly defining the circumstances in which lethal force can be used. We do not have that definition in the Bill and that is a grave mistake. It leaves us wide open to a repeat of what has happened in the past.

For those reasons, I again commend the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West for presenting the clause. I encourage him to divide the House because I believe that it is sufficiently important to justify doing so. I encourage all hon. Members to vote for the clause because it is crucial.

Mr. Flannery: We are discussing something that is extremely complicated, yet, in a curious way, it is simple. I well understand the problems of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) who, I am sure, has faced circumstances not dissimilar from those we are discussing. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is a part-time officer and he must have been confronted with such situations.

I remember being over there myself—I am sure that many other hon. Members have had similar experiences—when a group of us, who had been out on a late night commitment and were on our way home, were stopped by a patrol at about midnight. I know what the Army is, many of us do, but I felt my back go cold when I saw the weapons around me. It was a terrible and difficult situation. People who must face such situations have my deepest sympathy. None the less, my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) put his finger on it when he said that there is a loophole. It is necessary that we have a form of words to which reference can be made if anything goes wrong. It should be a cautionary measure for those people who find themselves in a difficult position.

There is always somebody who is nervous on such occasions and who possibly slightly loosens the safety catch when he should not. We all know that there are people who, on occasions, are trigger happy. The expression, "shoot to kill" did not come from nowhere.

John Stalker ultimately became a casualty of his inquiries, fortunately not a mortal casualty. That report has not yet come out. Those inquiries did not come from nowhere but were the result of incidents such as those we have already discussed. However, that inquiry is not complete, but nor are the guidelines in the law complete until this loophole has been filled.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone used the word "naive", but I am sure he did not mean it. This clause is a serious and honourable attempt—not emanating from one person—to close that loophole. I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman ransacked his conscience he would discover that there were circumstances in which reference could have been made to such a clause—such incidents take place closer to him than to many of us. He is aware that, no matter what differences exist between us, we profoundly worry about the colleagues whom I am happy to see on the Bench behind me. I always make a point of saying that.

I commend this clause to the House. It is sensible and necessary and an honest addition to the Bill. I believe that we should divide the House, but I hope that the clause will be accepted, possibly without a Division.

Mr. Alton: The problem in a debate of this kind is that without the advice of Stalker or the Sampson commission, and even with the Baker report, it is difficult to make a judgment on whether this new clause strikes the right balance in the safeguarding of civil liberties. I fully understand and agree with the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). As hon. Members have already said, the number of references in the Baker report are minimal when it comes to the use of lethal force. I accept the point made by the hon. Gentleman about what circumstances might make it legitimate for the security forces to use lethal force. They are in a very difficult position.

I should not want to be the person having to make a judgment about whether he was under threat of imminent death from a member of a terrorist organisation who might just have committed a crime and be running away with a gun in his hand. Under this clause, I would have to make a decision about whether I was at risk. This matter needs further consideration and is not best left to a Division of the House. We ought to ponder it at greater length.

7 pm

About 200 members of the security forces have died in the course of their duties since 1969. Probably what is needed is not legislation but more appropriate machinery which we should use to deal with cases in which it is alleged that the security forces have caused death or serious injury.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) talked about the findings of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. I agree with what he said about the secrecy surrounding the use of the yellow card. That matter ought to be more open and we need to understand more about the circumstances in which it is permissible for the security forces to use force. The standing commission noticed a striking contrast between the investigation of deaths caused by the security forces in Great Britain and those caused in Northern Ireland. In Great Britain there is a reasonably quick procedure which involves the suspension from duty of the officers involved. There is then a report to Parliament and a fairly rapid submission of a report to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

By contrast, in Northern Ireland there have been complaints that the legal representatives of the relatives of dead civilians have been unable to secure access to papers or evidence. There have been accusations of irregularities in the police files relating to such cases. The ninth report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights says:

> "While the circumstances in Northern Ireland do differ substantially from those in London (for example, as regards obtaining reliable evidence), there is nevertheless no sufficient reason why the deaths of civilians at the hands of the security forces . . . should not only be treated but also be seen to be treated as a matter of equally urgent and immediate concern."

It is my strong view that only an independent standing tribunal with investigatory functions can depoliticise the process of investigation. Such a tribunal would be required to investigate every case in which the use of force by the security forces has resulted in serious injury or in death. The tribunal should have a legally qualified chairman. Its members should be appointed for a fixed period of years by the Secretary of State. The tribunal would have the same powers as a tribunal of inquiry or local inquiry under the Police Act 1964. It would thus have power to compel the attendance of witnesses, insist on the production of documents, and take evidence on oath. Information could

[Mr. Alton]

be withheld from it only on the highest grounds of national security endorsed by the Secretary of State. In general, the reports of the tribunal would be published.

At present it is not the Government's practice to publish the instructions given about the circumstances in which force might legitimately be used. The relevant instructions have been seen by members of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. In paragraph 24 of its ninth report it concluded:

"We were impressed by the strictness of these instructions. If obeyed by the security forces, no member of the law-abiding public need be concerned for his safety and neither need members of the security forces equally fear breaking the law. However, we feel that the circumstances in which the security forces may open fire should be a matter of greater public knowledge and public debate. If the circumstances in which the security forces are authorised to open fire were more widely known, there might be less danger of persons' lives being put at risk."

That point was made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. Even if it is not considered appropriate to reveal the precise contents of the force instructions or the yellow card, it is at least desirable that the general conditions in which fire may be opened by the security forces should be properly and openly discussed. The Government should seriously consider making the instructions public and more precise.

Section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 authorises the use of reasonable force to prevent crime, to arrest an offender or to prevent his escape. In 1984 in the Farrell case the European Court of Human Rights took the view that this provision was far too broad. More precise rules should be laid down embodying the principle that lethal force should be used only when necessary to save life or to prevent serious injury. A precise rule of this type would make it easier for prosecutions to be brought against policemen or service men charged with illegitimate killings.

For those reasons, the new clause does not entirely fulfil the criteria that I have laid before the House. That is my view and the view of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I am reluctant to vote with the Opposition on this clause, and hope that they will not press it to a Division.

Mr. Scott: Let me say at the outset that I recognise that the use of force, and especially lethal force, by the police and the military in Northern Ireland is a legitimate ground for concern. Any incident involving death or serious injury in which the security forces in Northern Ireland are involved is fully and impartially investigated by the RUC and, as a matter of course, the papers have to be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In this debate we have heard the views of the hon. Members for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). Those views illustrate the different perceptions that people have about this very difficult situation.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) set out some admirable and uncontentious principles. However, the matter comes down to a single, simple question: should we rely on the law—"vague and unsatisfactory" is how it was described by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North—or should we seek to spell out in statute what the law might be and define it much more tightly than it is at the moment? The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West mentioned the principle of proportionality. While not saying that that principle has nothing to do with the matter before the House, again the question must be, should we try to spell it out in statute, or should we leave it to the courts to decide that the action taken was reasonable in all the circumstances?

Even the new clause shows how difficult it is to specify in legislation guidelines on the use of lethal force that would cover every possible eventuality. The present law gives the courts the freedom to take account of all the circumstances and to reach a proper judgment on whether the use of force was reasonable. If we attempt to specify the guidelines, as this new clause attempts to do, it tends to expose the difficulties of going down that road.

As it stands, I do not think that the clause would remove all areas of ambiguity from the law on the use of lethal force. In any case, on a matter of principle, the use of force should continue to be governed, as it is at the moment, by section 3 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967. That Act provides that a person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the prevention of crime in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders or persons unlawfully at large. That rule applies to the exercise of ordinary police powers and to powers under the emergency legislation. It is also the basis of the Criminal Law Act 1967 which applies in England and Wales.

In responding to what has been an interesting debate, I have to stand absolutely on that point of principle. It is right that members of the security forces exercising emergency powers should be bound by the normal rule of law in relation to the use of force. That was the fundamental question put to us by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West. Should they be treated differently because of the special powers that they have and the special situation that confronts them in Northern Ireland? To that question I have to give an unequivocal yes.

This new clause would apply one rule to the emergency powers and another to the ordinary powers. For that reason, it would be inappropriate to legislate on this matter in the Bill. I advise the House not to give the new clause a Second Reading.

Mr. Mallon: Is there not something contradictory about the position? The powers in the Bill and in other amendments to the 1978 Act are tested by the touchstone of "reasonable grounds" for arrest, search or stopping people. The essence of the new clause is that it puts the onus on the person using the force to have "reasonable cause to believe". I am sure that we all want to establish accountability, rather than having to make the decisions about whether the force was reasonable. In terms of accountability, and of consistency with the changes that are made in the rest of the Bill, the onus of having to have reasonable cause is much more powerful and effective than having to define the reasonableness of the force used.

Mr. Scott: I believe that in standing firm on section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 we were absolutely following that principle. It is for the court to decide whether the actions were reasonable in the circumstances. That is the point of principle on which I stand. Even the new clause shows how difficult it is to define precisely what alternative arrangements should be put in place. The new

clause does not remove all ambiguity from the law. The present position has worked well, and the House would be wise to reject——

Mr. McNamara: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister in the course of his penultimate sentence. Will he address his mind to the point made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and myself about the yellow card and information about it?

Mr. Scott: If I have not done so, it is because I believe that the instructions on the use of force by the security forces are not directly relevant to the debate. This debate is about the law that should apply, not about the guidance that is given by the Chief Constable who is responsible for the operations of his force, or about the instructions that the Army Council gives to its soldiers on how best to stay within the law. Those are matters of operational concern for those involved in the operations of the police and the Army respectively. This debate is about the law, not about the guidance that is given on how to stay within it.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Minister agree that he is making a mistake about the yellow card? It is merely a restricted document—not a confidential or highly secret one. It would allay many of the fears that have been expressed today if the contents of that yellow card were made known. I do not doubt that other hon. Members have seen it. I, too, have seen it, and I think that nothing would be lost by allowing the public to know about the extremely strict rules under which members of the security forces must operate.

Does the Minister agree with me that matters that are not pertinent to the debate have been raised today? The problem that someone may be nervous or trigger-happy will not be remedied by this type of legislation.

Mr. Scott: The yellow card is not my responsibility but that of the Ministry of Defence. I believe that I am right in asserting that the contents of the yellow card are not at issue. What is at issue are the laws governing the use of force and lethal force. My contention is that it should be for the courts to decide whether the force that is used is reasonable in all the circumstances. Therefore, I must advise the House to reject the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:——

The House divided: Ayes 82, Noes 185.

Division No. 140] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Cleiland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Bulmer, Esmond
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howells, Geraint
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*

Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Matthew
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wainwright, R.
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 6

REPEAL OF SECTION 12 AND SCHEDULE 1 OF 1978 ACT

'Section 12 and Schedule 1 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 shall be repealed.'.—*[Mr. Archer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Archer: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is a simple proposal. It is to repeal section 12 of the principal Act, which gives the Secretary of State power to inter someone without trial — not with a Diplock trial, not with a trial that is open to criticism, but without any trial at all. This provision places the liberty of anyone in Northern Ireland at the mercy of the Secretary of State. It is a draconian power and a worthy successor to some of those powers in the Emergency Powers Act 1920 to which a South African politician referred when he said that he would give up all the powers available to him for one section in the 1920 Act.

This provision has not been used since 1976. I do not believe that any Government would attempt to justify its use. It is not even in force. What is at issue is the power of the Secretary of State to bring it into force under section 33. Sir George Baker recommended that the provision should be repealed. He cited the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, which said:

"the retention of the power, perhaps as one of the last resort, is anathema to the rule of law and an obstacle to claims that human rights are as wholly protected in Northern Ireland as they ought to be in the current circumstances".

Sir George said:

"the case for repeal of Section 12 is pressed not only by the various bodies concerned with human rights, as is to be expected, but by many others, including those who have been involved in operating detention. A summary of their experience is that detention never worked and never will work; it is always counter-productive in the end as well as costly."

One could not be clearer than that.

What is the argument about? When I raised the question on 20 December 1984 with the former Secretary of State, he said that it was important to retain the power in case of

"a sudden short-term crisis, which might occur when Parliament was in recess."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1984; Vol. 70, c. 581.]

That is not the proper approach to emergency legislation. The whole point of emergency legislation is that it is found to be vital to the public interest for the time being, but that it is clearly a distortion of the normal legal system and should be repealed as soon as we can live without it. It will not do to say, "Perhaps, one day, we will need it, so we had better keep it."

When the question was raised in Committee the Minister of State said, fairly, that he saw no prospect of that provision being used but

"there is always the possibility of unforeseen sudden deterioration in the security position".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 3 March 1987; c. 386.]

Sadly, there is no Government proposal on the Amendment Paper to repeal the provision in the light of that debate. It is not for me to speculate on the tussle within the Government between the appeal of the Minister of State for common sense and fairness and the dull repetitious chant of the old guard, "You never know" and "It is better to have the individual by the throat, just in case."

It is the function of hon. Members, especially those such as Northern Ireland Ministers, to tell the old apparatchiks that we do not run this country like that and that the public would not stand for it if we tried. I hope that that is right because, if it is not, freedom is no longer the healthy plant that it once was. The Opposition, at least, will give the House a chance to say, "Here is one emergency provision for which, if a case ever existed, no shred can now be made out." When that happens to a provision that was said at its inception to be introduced as a temporary measure to deal with an emergency, it is a power that the Government should relinquish.

7.30 pm

Mr. McNamara: Hon. Members who were on the Committee hoped that there might be some change in the Government's attitude at the end of the debate on this matter. We now hope that we shall hear from the Secretary of State that that is the case.

The point that I wish to make is that internment failed. It was the strongest recruiting force for the Provisional IRA; it almost gave it legitimacy. It turned a whole community against the rule of law in some circumstances. It caused grave difficulties, and it resulted in the deaths of many people — security forces, innocent civilians and members of both communities. It failed completely in the purpose for which it was introduced — to bring an end

to terrorism—because terrorism is still with us. It failed politically, because Stormont fell, the Unionists were divided and crushed, and eventually we had direct rule.

The whole history of this power has shown it to have failed absolutely—whether its aim was to preserve the Queen's peace in Northern Ireland or to be an effective tool to ensure that terrorism could not succeed or could be suppressed. Moreover, the essence of it is a complete denial of human rights. It means a person being picked up on the whisper of an unknown informer, or on the basis that he is a civil rights campaigner or active in a trade union, or that he happens to believe that the partition of Ireland is not the best solution to the problems of the 32 counties. The system failed, and the evil men who saw all the signs of it coming escaped. In the days after internment, the same evil men for whom it was intended were fighting street battles with the security forces. Internment is a complete loss, and it should go.

Sir John Farr: I share the views expressed so far about the desire to end the power to introduce or use detention. However, I should have thought it impossible to choose a worse or a more inopportune time to introduce the change.

As the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) pointed out, the power has not been used for many years. However, I believe that it must remain on the statute book as a weapon in the armoury of the forces of law and order, in case it has to be utilised again. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman rightly said, to utilise it would involve a serious downgrading in the security position. But did he consult the security forces in Northern Ireland before he tabled the new clause? Has he obtained their advice on whether it would be beneficial?

I would expect the security forces to be almost 100 per cent. agreed in their answer, especially after the nights of rioting in west and north Belfast yesterday, the troubles in County Londonderry and all the other difficulties in the troubled Province. I would expect them to say, "Certainly we are with you, but not at the moment. It will be construed by the men of evil as a sign of weakness, and we cannot afford that."

Mr. Mallon: There have been two events in my life that I recall so well that I can remember exactly what I was doing and the exact moment in the day when I learned of them. One was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; the other was the introduction of internment in the north of Ireland.

I remember saying to someone when I heard about internment, "This is the end of the north of Ireland as it has been known since the state was formed." I think that those words were reasonably accurate. Internment was a watershed in the history of the north of Ireland. Most people would agree that at the moment when that terrible mistake was made the north of Ireland, as it had existed until then, was finished. We should keep that in our minds today when we debate this measure.

There are very few issues in northern Irish politics about which I feel certain, but I am sure about one thing: internment will never be used there again. It has been such an utter and terrible mistake and has fostered such violence, subversion and alienation, that I do not believe that any Government would make such a mistake again. I say that with a degree of confidence and not a little hope, for, if they were to do so, it would be said not just that it was the end of Northern Ireland as it has been known since the state was formed, but that it was the end of the north of Ireland.

I do not believe that internment could ever be introduced again, given the demographic, political and social changes and the rise of paramilitary groups in the north of Ireland. In any attempt to achieve political stability that did not involve radical changes, those radical changes would have to take over.

Even at this late hour, I ask the Government to reconsider. Why should we keep on the statute book a measure that will not be used again and that, if it were used again, would be even more disastrous than in the past? Why should we not give a signpost to the people of the north of Ireland, showing that at least the Government had the conviction and the resolution to return to the highest and most normal standards—even if there were men of violence in the north of Ireland who did not wish it to happen? That would be a potent message from the Floor of the House to the people of the north of Ireland.

I ask the Government to act with resolution, because resolution will be needed, and also with realism, because, if they are realistic, they will accept that they are keeping a dead letter on the books.

The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) spoke of what happened in the north of Ireland over the weekend. I should like to refer to that as well, but from a different perspective. Within the advice given in Northern Ireland, there is still the residue of a belief that problems can be solved by means of punitive legislation and force. The force that was used at this week's funeral must have revolted any person with any sensitivity or concern for human life and respect for the dead. It must have forced people to ask questions. It must certainly have forced people to ask why this enormous show of force was used on such a sensitive occasion when the only winners, at the end of the day, were those who were trying to manipulate it.

The argument that is advanced is that a show of force was necessary to prevent people from firing shots over the coffin. There is some validity in that argument. If, however, we ask why shots are fired over coffins, the answer is that it is to get publicity. The net result of this ill-advised course was that they got two and a half or three days of free publicity worldwide.

One of my fears is that if this provision remains on the statute book, advice of that type will always be available. There will be those who feel that that is the way to deal with the matter and that, when they offer advice of that type to the Government, they are doing what is right. The way to prevent that type of mistake over internment from ever happening again is to make sure that that provision does not remain on the statute book.

Mr. Alton: I support what has been said. Internment will be regarded by those who write the history of the last 20 years in Northern Ireland as one of the saddest decisions that was ever taken. It led to the alienation of an already distanced group of people in Northern Ireland's minority community. I vividly recall the letters that I received and the conversations that I had with those who felt very emotional about what was happening in Northern Ireland. It caused enormous trauma. Internment led to the hunger strikes and to bitterness and death. I hope that such incidents will never be repeated.

[Mr. Alton]

I recall my first visit to the Maze, which must be one of the most extraordinary places that anybody can enter. I was shocked by the conversations that I had in the Maze and by the attitude of the people there. The attitude of most of them was formed during their period of internment. It provided a breeding ground that enabled the IRA and the other terrorist organisations to make many recruits.

For those reasons, I do not believe that the Government would ever contemplate reintroducing internment. This antiquated and unnecessary measure remains on the statute book, and I hope that we shall repeal it. It is very much out of line with the Secretary of State's approach. He accepts that if there is to be reconcilliation and coexistence in Northern Ireland the alienated community must be brought back into the equation.

Reference has been made to the events of the last 24 hours. They should be a useful signal to those who might be tempted to think that if battles are fought on the streets of Belfast they will bring about change. I have always disputed the view that that is the way to bring about change. The appropriate place to bring about change is in this debating Chamber. People should take their place here, whether from the Unionist or the Nationalist tradition, and work in a democratic Chamber to bring about the kind of society in which reconciliation might take place.

Reconciliation will not take place in H-blocks, through internment, or, as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) has just said, through punitive legislation. Reconciliation will be brought about by the kind of initiative upon which the Secretary of State has very bravely embarked in the last 18 months. Therefore, I hope that he will take seriously the new clause that has been moved by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

Mr. Flannery: I do not know how much notice will be taken of this debate, but I feel confident that if we decide to abolish interniment it will command attention. The abolition of internment would weaken the hand of the terrorists. Internment strengthened their hand. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has just said, it would demonstrate that we want conciliation to be brought about in Northern Ireland. Both communities would gain from the passing of new clause 6. Internment greatly strengthened the hand of the terrorists. The Government would be taking a progressive step if they removed from both communities the threat of internment.

7.45 pm

Mr. Maginnis: I have mixed feelings about the retention of internment, which is provided for in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. Internment has been used in Northern Ireland on a number of occasions. It has been used wisely, discreetly and with discrimination.

Mr. McNamara: That is what we were complaining about.

Mr. Maginnis: I thought that that particular word might alert hon. Members.

Internment was used to take out of circulation terrorists who could not be dealt with by means of the civil law. Innocent people in Northern Ireland are being gunned down by the score, but that is seldom referred to in this Chamber. I shall quote again figures that I have quoted before. In my constituency, 181 members of the community have been gunned down, but only 27 of those murders have been solved, so 154 out of 181 murders remain unsolved. The security forces know who is responsible for many of the killings, but they continue to say to us that the civil law is inadequate to deal with the problem.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maginnis: Not now.

My community would like internment to be used as wisely as it was used by the Northern Ireland Government on various occasions over many years. It would not wish internment to be used as it was used in 1971. Although the legislation was enacted by the Northern Ireland Government, internment was not carried by that Government. It was implemented out by the Westminster Government, who have assumed powers over security. Their information was inadequate and internment did considerable harm.

Although I do not always believe him, the Secretary of State tells us that intelligence has improved a hundredfold during the last 17 years. We now have the necessary information to effect a form of internment that would alienate nobody but that would take out of circulation the terrorist godfathers. It would provide an opportunity for those on both sides of the community who want to be rid of the terrorists to make some progress.

It is amazing that when we talk about internment we hear that it, and it almost alone, was the thing that caused the alienation of the minority community. Let us debate in the House another subject that is politically unacceptable and we will hear that it, and it alone, caused the alienation of the minority community. By now I am used to hearing that it was 50 years of Unionist Government that caused the alienation of the minority community. It is so easy for people who want to make that political point to choose anything with which they disagree and say that that was what caused the alienation of the minority community.

I am talking about the alienation of an entire community, a community alienated by terrorism. For 17 years successive Governments have done nothing to quell that terrorism. There has been almost total failure. In fact, there has been what many of us see as something approaching abject surrender to terrorists. Points of view have been put across here suggesting that one might go a little bit easier.

When we are talking about internment, I do not know how we got on to the subject of a funeral. However, as that is a subject to which I can now allude, is there not a great deal of ambivalence in the attitude adopted by Father Faul? I quote Father Faul in so far as I believe that he is a man who genuinely detests terrorism. He is a man who does not want to see the terrorist succeed and who has no desire, as I suspect some people even in the Chamber might have, to ride on the back, or at least to take advantage of, the terrorist as he operates in Northern Ireland at present. Father Faul has suggested that that incident will alienate the minority — let us call it the Roman Catholic — community. If we did not prevent a display of terrorism at the funeral, the majority community and a sizeable

number of the minority community would be disgusted by a display such as we saw a week or two ago when firearms were taken from a church to demonstrate that terrorism held sway in Northern Ireland. Terrorism does hold sway in Northern Ireland, so let us not try to hide that fact, and the Government have proved to be impotent in dealing with it.

Senior policemen to whom I speak suggest—they are talking about a comparative few—that if they could take only eight people out of the east Tyrone area they would have a tremendous advantage in the fight against terrorism. Those policemen are faced with a situation where they come to the courts—it does not matter whether it is Diplock courts or jury trials—and find that the evidence they are able to reveal to the court is inadequate.

That is not the only criticism that I have of the courts, but I do not want to go down that road too far, except to say that it amazed me to find in my constituency quite recently that three men caught with a 600lb car bomb, taking it in to blow apart a town that is predominantly Roman Catholic, were given suspended sentences. They were not lads; they were grown men. I observed that one was probably more likely to get a prison sentence for having 600lb of smuggled butter than a 600lb bomb. However, at least I noticed that the fourth member of the gang was imprisoned for five years. The judge apologised to him and said something to the effect "My dear fellow, you will feel that you are badly done by, but I think it is ridiculous that your fellow bombers got off scot free, so I am going to sentence you to five years"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman must come to the clause that we are discussing.

Mr. Maginnis: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for digressing.

My point is quite simple. The law is inadequate. It is proven to be inadequate. The 154 unresolved murders, out of a total of 181, in my constituency cry out for some sort of justice. I believe that by taking the known godfathers out of the community by internment we could achieve some degree of success. If the Secretary of State is not to use internment, if he is not to take his courage in his hands and give us what we need to defeat terrorism, let us not deceive the people any longer. Let us get rid of the section. Either make use of it, or get rid of it. It is only an aggravation to those who are opposed to it to have it there, and it is only a frustration to those who want it there if it is not to be used.

Ms. Clare Short: The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) put before us terrible figures of the number of his constituents who have been killed and the small number of cases that have been cleared up. He went on to say that the security forces know who was responsible for the murders and therefore we should have internment because the people involved should be locked up. That is an extremely dangerous argument. I sympathise with the emotion that he must feel about the terrible number of killings, but such an argument rules out the rule of law everywhere. The police will say up and down this country that they know who the bad families are who are doing the burglaries on estates and so on. Sometimes they are right, and sometimes they are wrong. If one goes around locking up individuals who one thinks are responsible, but one is wrong, one causes enormous bitterness and a sense of injustice that polarises, divides and leads to more violence, more distress and more deaths among the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Although I am sure that we all understand and sympathise with the anger that the hon. Gentleman must feel, I think that the course he suggests of allowing the security forces to lock up those who they think are responsible, without having any evidence to prove that they are responsible, is far too dangerous. If those involved, the godfathers as the hon. Gentleman called them, all known to the security forces, are six in number and are responsible for large numbers of deaths, the security forces would have to be very incompetent if they could not follow them and obtain the evidence to convict them. That leads me to suspect that they might not be correct in their suspicions and that the policy recommended by the hon. Gentleman is very dangerous. However, I note that his conclusion agrees with that of most Opposition Members. He says that if the Government are not to start using internment again, they should not have the power in the Bill. I agree with him on that, as do many of the hon. Members who have spoken.

I shall not repeat the arguments, but my view is similar to that of others who have spoken. I believe that internment was a disaster for Northern Ireland. Many innocent people were interned, which led to enormous anger and bitterness, with the families of those who were interned becoming involved with paramilitary organisations because of the anger that they felt. I saw that process at work on my visits to Northern Ireland at the time. It was a disaster which should not be repeated.

If, in future the Secretary of State thinks that it is necessary to introduce internment, surely he should come before the House and seek those powers. It is such a serious move and change that we should not simply have powers in legislation lying on the table to be picked up whenever the right hon. Gentleman feels like using them. As I read the Bill—I can hardly believe that I am right—the right hon. Gentleman can start doing that tomorrow without any permission from the House of Commons. He could go home tonight and decide that, as he was getting a bit irritated, he would start interning a few people. That is outrageous and extraordinary.

The Government may argue—I do not agree—that internment is a solution that they may have to consider in future. I say seriously to the Secretary of State that, even if he believes that, he should withdraw the powers from the Bill and give us the undertaking that if he ever proposes to introduce internment he will bring a new Bill before the House of Commons and let us debate it, rather than use those powers on his own, without even having a debate in the House.

8 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) suggested that we should have an opportunity to debate a new Bill prior to implementing detention. I humbly suggest to the House that to some extent that is what happened with the tragic use of detention in the 1970s. In other words, instead of using the power correctly and selectively, the Government signalled their intention for weeks, so that the people who should have been lifted had long since gone. There was bungling of other intelligence. As a result, the whole community was flabbergasted and incensed.

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

The emotional arguments that have been put forward against the principle of selective detention are suspect in themselves. It has been suggested that detention has been used on only one occasion in Northern Ireland and that it had a tremendous impact upon the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who remembers it. Selective detention had been used before then. I believe it was not detention but an accumulation of attacks, which ultimately was a challenge to the state. I believe that that was mishandled for well over a year and that conflagration was bound to come, just as we have seen with the apparently successful settlement of an internecine feud recently. The paramilitaries in Belfast and throughout the Province are now unleashing their forces against the state rather than against one another.

We should at least examine what this is all about. It is easy for an hon. Member in the House to say that the security forces are incapable if they cannot bring the evidence to a court of law, which would bring conviction. Even in the normal process of justice, when we sit in a court, we are never terribly sure who is the accused—whether it is the person bringing the charge or the person in the dock—because we bend over backwards to put the weight of evidence in favour of the accused. The only legislation that has been introduced to the opposite effect has been the most recent Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, which places some responsibility upon the accused to prove his innocence rather than on the prosecution to prove guilt.

In dealing with hardened terrorism, when we start the normal process of British justice and give the benefit of the doubt to the accused, it is extremely difficult to be sure that there is cast-iron evidence that will stand up—whether it is forensic, collaborative evidence or accomplice participation. All such evidence, at whatever level, can be suspect.

I recognise that there are divided opinions in Northern Ireland. I know that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was one of the first to speak against detention, and there are others who are not in favour of detention. Frankly, I still believe that selective detention is a weapon in the armoury of any democratic state, which it cannot willingly throw away without deep consideration.

I call in my support not, I suspect, a biased Unionist, not even anybody with suspicious religious convictions, but the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and the former Prime Minister of the Irish Repulic, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, who have both said in my presence that no democratic state should throw away the armoury of selective detention. It may be debatable whether it should be used in certain circumstances or in a particular case. It had been suggested in the debate that we should take it away from our legislation and that if we want to use it on another occasion we should have a debate in the rational atmosphere of the House of Commons while the terrorists, who should be moved on quickly, continue to do their dirty business or get offside so that they cannot be apprehended. That is the height of lunacy. While I can sympathise with some aspects of the arguments in the debate, I believe that it would be folly to remove the provision from the statute.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I disagree strongly with the arguments that have been put forward today by the representatives of the Unionist party. It is a good sign that they have come back to the House, and I welcome that, but internment in itself would be wrong on the grounds of civil liberties. Of that there is no doubt at all. That is not to deny for one moment the sheer evil of a sustained terrorist compaign. As we know, most of that terrorism comes from the Provisional IRA and sister organisations on that side of the sectarian divide, but there is terrorism on the other side, which I am sure hon. Members will not wish to deny.

To a large extent, the debate is like last week's debate on capital punishment. I did not speak in that debate, but I strongly took the point that to bring back capital punishment for terrorists would play directly into their hands. No matter what the Provisional IRA and Provisional Sinn Fein may say publicly about opposing capital punishment, we all know instinctively that they would like that. They would like it for all the reasons that were deployed in the debate last week.

Surely the same, to a large extent, applies to internment. Again, it would be a powerful propaganda weapon for the Provisional IRA. It would be able to show that people had been taken in and locked up and not convicted of any offence, because, in essence, that is what it is all about. They would be placed in confinement, not because of proceedings in court, but because they had been suspected of various offences. That goes against the grain of what we believe to be the rule of law.

Not only is the Provisional IRA affected. I am very pleased about the fact that when Provisional Sinn Fein stood for the first time in elections in the Irish Republic it received less than 2 per cent. of the vote. As I have said on several occasions, that somewhat undermines Sinn Fein's claim to speak in the name of 1798 and 1916.

If internment took place once again, if a feeling grew in the Republic that people were being locked up without just cause, it would be argued that that was the case not because they were terrorists, but because they happened to take a nationalist point of view. I wonder whether the vote for Provisional Sinn Fein would increase in such circumstances. What would be the effect in other places abroad, such as America, where there is anti-British feeling—and I believe that I am right to describe it as such—over Northern Ireland? What would be the effect among people who are not willing to consider the facts or to recognise that terrorism is precisely terrorism? Would we not be playing into their hands? That would be a short-sighted move and would be counter-productive. It could only play directly into the hands of the terrorists.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that the Secretary of State should not have his powers over internment. If such a circumstance were to arise, the Secretary of State should have to come to the House and argue his case accordingly. For those reasons, I strongly disagree with the arguments that have been put forward by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) and the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth).

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): Before I respond to the points in the debate, may I state that I regard it as a privilege to be able to join in the proceedings. I read with great interest the reports of the debates that took place in Committee. As an observer I must state how much I respected the constructive approach taken throughout the discussions in Committee.

I hope that those hon. Members who served on the Committee feel that the Government have in a significant number of areas sought to respond to those discussions. We will shortly come to a number of Government amendments that have been tabled in direct response to points made in Committee. I hope that hon. Members will feel that that is a proper response.

I have also had the opportunity to read the debate that took place in Committee about this new clause. An amendment was tabled in Committee on this subject, but was not voted upon. I understand why my hon. Friend the Minister for State and others believed that this matter should be brought to the Floor of the House for a fuller discussion. I welcome the fact that the House has had the opportunity to hear both sides of the argument and to consider the difficult issue of how to deal with terrorism and fight and combat it as effectively as we can under the rule of law. It is right that we should consider the place that this provision might or might not have in that context.

Arguments have been raised about the merits of introducing detention. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) was the only hon. Member to advocate the introduction of selective detention. He made it clear that he would prefer to see it introduced now, but if it was not to be introduced he said it was more honest and straightforward to abandon the power and seek a fresh authority if we decided to change the policy. I recognise that others did not argue the case for detention. Indeed there were strong criticisms of it. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) made his concerns clear—as he did in Committee—about the damage that he believes is caused by the existence of the provision and the extra propaganda weapon that it gives to those who seek to attract support to their cause and who try to maintain alienation and not to work for reconciliation.

8.15 pm

As I understand the argument of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, this is a question not whether we should have detention now, but whether the power should remain on the statute book to be exercised in a particular circumstance. All the points that I could have made have been eloquently made already in the debate. There is considerable force in the comments made by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone about the different situation that presently exists. It is fair to point out that the previous introduction of internment was made under the Northern Ireland Government in 1971. We inherited it through the introduction of direct rule and it continued to operate under new arrangements. Clearly there were great problems and a new situation now exists. Intelligence is now very much better and in certain circumstances many among the security forces would argue that there is a possibility that the provision could be operated in a very different way.

However, it would be difficult to defend the position from arguments that the misrepresentation and the propaganda weapon that the provision would provide and the apparent abandonment of the normal conventions of the rule of law would be valuable ammunition—I use that term in the metaphorical sense—to the terrorists to allow them to argue the case that they were not living in a just society, and that they were entitled to the support of others in their fight for fairness and justice. This is a difficult matter to make a judgment upon.

It is appropriate that I should reply to the new clause. It is the responsibility of the holder of my office to think very carefully before reaching a balanced decision about whether it would be right to surrender the emergency reserve provision. The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev Martin Smyth) used that phrase. I have not heard it, as he said he has directly from the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) or from the former Taoiseach. The hon. Gentleman said that no responsible Government could lose from its range of possible measures possible recourse to such a power. I am aware that the power exists in the Republic and I have heard similar comments elsewhere.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Secretary of State explain why it does not apply on the mainland of the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's question would lead me to a much wider discussion if I had to recount the distinctions and differences in that matter. The fact is that the position is different. In some ways, that is perhaps the understatement of the evening. There is obviously a difference in the level of problems that we face in Northern Ireland with regard to terrorism.

Mr. Mallon: Is it fair to quote the opinions of two political leaders in Ireland that are not on record as far as I know? Is it fair for the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) to quote an opinion which is not on record and for the Secretary of State to take up and use such an opinion? As I understood it, from the way in which the point was made in the House, those opinions may have been voiced as private opinions in private conversations.

Mr. King: I am trying to respond to the debate and to the points that have been made. If the hon. Gentleman checks *Hansard*, he will see that I said that I had not heard the hon. Member for Foyle and the former Taoiseach use that phrase. But I understand the argument and have heard it elsewhere.

The question is whether we can ignore the unforeseeable. I recognise Sir George Baker's forceful recommendation that the powers should be removed, but chapter 6 of the report, on the detention of terrorists, says this:

> "The question is whether to repeal these provisions. This appreciation was written before the Darkley chapel killings on 20 November 1983 and the Harrods' bomb explosion. I have reviewed my conclusions having regard to the universal condemnation and loathing since expressed. I have altered nothing."

Sir George Baker reviewed his recommendation against those events to see whether it still stood. Interestingly, he accepted implicitly that, because of those events, he should go back to see whether it was necessary to reconsider his recommendation, which had not been published at the time of those events. He believed that the events did not justify his changing those views.

The question that I put to the House is this. Could it become necessary to reconsider the position if there was a sudden deterioration in security or if a serious problem arose in the ability of the courts to deal with terrorist crimes that might necessitate emergency action for which the alternatives were all unpalatable or full of difficulties? I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Minister of State in Committee: there is no prospect of the powers being brought back into force. But there is always the possibility of a sudden deterioration in the position. I should tell the

[Mr. King]

hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that it is not an untrammelled power or one that I could exercise without reference to the House. The hon. Members for Belfast, South and for Fermanagh and South Tyrone said that speed and surprise are important elements if the power is to be effective, but there is no question of my exercising it without reference to the House. For it to be effective, it would have to be confirmed by the House.

Mr. Alton: The Secretary of State has given that welcome assurance. Sir George Baker said in conclusion at paragraph 236:

"If 'doomsday' arrives in whatever form it will be the duty of the then Government to bring any necessary legislation before Parliament immediately."

He went on to say that, after the Birmingham bombing, that was precisely what the Government did. Given that the powers could be exercised rapidly, why does not the Secretary of State accept the Opposition's arguments?

Mr. King: The power exists, but there is no proposal to reintroduce it. As Sir George Baker said, detention is phased out in fact but kept available in law. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said that a problem could arise while the House was in recess. We must consider whether, in all the circumstances, we can be sure of being able to act promptly. We must then assess whether this reserve power, with all the problems that it created and all the background history, is none the less the least worse approach to an as now unforeseen problem which no Government could stand idly by and fail to tackle.

Mr. Archer: The Secretary of State has puzzled some of us. A few moments ago, he assured us that he could not activate the power without reference to the House.

Mr. King: I said that it would have to be confirmed by the House.

Mr. Archer: I am still not wholly clear. Does the Secretary of State mean that he might activate the power without reference to the House and act under it before the House had an opportunity to consider it? That is the problem about which some of my hon. Friends were worried. But if he says that he needs the power in case the House is in recess, it negates the argument.

Mr. King: I could act under an order, which could come into effect immediately, but it would be subject to affirmative resolution of the House.

This must be a matter of judgment. I am also conscious that it is a matter of perception. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) mentioned the attitude of the security forces. I consulted them to discover the perception that would exist. If the power was removed, even though it is not used and is held in reserve, people might think that Parliament was not even prepared to treat it as an ultimate fallback. We have heard lucid accounts which represent fairly the feelings of many people, especially in the border areas, but in other parts of the Province too, as well as the challenges, dangers and tragedies to which they have been exposed. If we accepted the new clause, those people might perceive that the Government and Parliament were not prepared, in an emergency, to make available that weapon in the armoury of the state in this respect.

On balance, I reach the judgment that, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State said to the Committee, I cannot recommend the House to accept the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:

The House divided: Ayes 80, Noes 168.

Division No. 141] **[8.28 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Eastham, Ken
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Neillist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Bulmer, Esmond
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan

Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Jackson, Robert
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 10

SEARCHES OF PERSONS

'In section 15(3)*(a)* of the 1978 Act there shall be inserted after "person", the words "whom he reasonably suspects of having with him unlawfully, munitions in any public place, or having with him any transmitter"; after "he has any", the word "such"; and after "him or any", the word "such".'—*[Mr. Archer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Archer: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

With this and the ensuing new clauses we come to the whole troubled area of the powers vested in the members of the security forces to stop people and to search them. Of necessity, they are powers to stop people who may well transpire to be blameless, respectable citizens going about their lawful business, and who may well be in a hurry for legitimate reasons. The Opposition accept that in the conditions that exist in Northern Ireland some such powers are essential and that their existence imposes some restraint on the men of violence and may lead to their detention and arrest. However, those powers are fraught with possibilities of trouble. Even if everyone concerned is patient, courteous and sensitive, there is a potential confrontation which, by reason of its purpose, is impregnated with suspicion. There is suspicion of the person who is stopped and searched, because without that suspicion there would be little purpose in stopping and searching him. The person stopped is suspicious that the power is being exercised, not for its real purpose, but for that of arrest.

It is all highly susceptible to misunderstanding, and that is true even if everyone is on his best behaviour. Given that we are talking about human beings who, like you and me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are sometimes irritable, who sometimes get out of the wrong side of the bed, and who sometimes carry with them a memory of some former bad experience, it is virtually inevitable that there will sometimes be irritation on both sides.

It is not surprising if the powers are sometimes used to pay off old scores, to give vent to discriminatory prejudice, or to flaunt a position of advantage. Even when that is not the case, it is not surprising if sometimes the powers are perceived in that way. We heard examples in Committee of how such powers are sometimes abused, and sometimes seen to be abused. Therefore, it is vital that the relationship between the various powers in the Bill is clearly understood and kept in mind throughout the episode. Of course, as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) reminded us, the person who has suffered inconvenience and delay, who may have been at the receiving end of insults, and who may have been made to remove his shoes and jacket, may not feel any great academic interest in the subsection that is applicable to that specific stage of the episode. It is vital that all members of the armed forces should not attempt to exercise powers that Parliament has not given to them.

Sir George Baker gave us many examples of powers that have apparently been abused or, at best, used pointlessly. As we were reminded in an earlier debate today, the members of the security forces are fallible, but we impose heavy burdens on them and require them to expose themselves to great danger. They have to make instant judgments and sometimes, if they are wrong, the penalty can be high. If, to all that, one adds the fact that they, too, may be browned off, exasperated or irritable, we must seek a delicate balance between insisting on high standards and occasionally making allowances. I say that about this group of new clauses.

New clause 10 is the first to raise such questions. It relates to the power in section 15(3) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 to stop a person in any public place and to search him for unlawful munitions or a transmitter, with a view to exercising the powers conferred by subsection (4). The only limit that is imposed is on the power to seize unlawful munitions or a transmitter. There is no limit on the power to stop and search someone for that purpose. The person need not

[Mr. Archer]

have behaved suspiciously. A person may be stopped for no reason at all. The purpose of the new clause is to limit the power to circumstances of reasonable suspicion.

I understand the value of having a power to stop and search at random. If the only test to be applied were whether that was of advantage to the security forces, clearly that is an advantage. However, when against that there has to be set the aggravation to innocent people, the opportunity for harassment, the occasions for misunderstanding, and the loss of public confidence in and support for the security forces, a balance must be struck.

I hope that I am being fair in saying that what I think emerged in Committee was that a distinction seems to be drawn between stopping and searching vehicles and stopping and searching people. I think that a consensus emerged that there can be no real complaint about the random search of vehicles under other powers, provided that it is conducted without discrimination and with sensitivity. However, with persons who are not in vehicles, or even when they are in vehicles, if nothing suspicious is found in the vehicle itself, I think the consensus was that the balance should be the other way. I shall not elaborate on the reasons at this hour, but say only that this new clause would give effect to that consensus, if I have got it right.

8.45 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: This is a rum clause. I have read section 15 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 more times than I have found enjoyable and I find it more difficult every time I read it. Evidently my difficulties are shared by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) who drafted what is not the most elegant of the new clauses that have been placed before the House. However, it is a consolation to me that we are the first House to consider this Bill. Perhaps the words that are shed during this debate may bear fruit in another place among Lords who are learned in the law.

I shall explain some of the curious features about this new clause in case something can be done about it later, because it is indeed awkward and rum. I begin with the observation made by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West on section 15(3) of the 1978 Act which quaintly states:

"Any member of Her Majesty's forces on duty or any constable may—*(a)* stop any person in any public place".

That is absolutely unqualified. It gives unqualified power to any member of the forces on duty or any constable to stop anybody. However, the matter ends there. A member of Her Majesty's forces or a constable can stop a person, can go on stopping him or, presumably stop him again and start him again. He cannot do anything but stop him. There is no qualification of the stopping power, and that is curious—at any rate in the context of the rest of the section.

The curious thing about this section is the mounting excitement with which one approaches subsection (4). In subsection (1) there is a power to enter any premises, other than a dwelling house, and to search it, but only

"with a view to exercising the powers conferred by subsection (4) below."

Therefore, we wait to find out the powers that are conferred by "subsection (4) below." Then we come to subsection (2) which states that any member of Her Majesty's forces may enter, if authorised, any dwelling house in which certain things are suspected but, however strong his suspicion may do that only

"with a view to exercising the said powers."

Holding our breath, we continue. We already have powers to enter premises other than dwelling houses and to enter a dwelling house. Subsection (3) is prefaced by the words:

"Any member of Her Majesty's forces on duty or any constable . . ."

may not only stop that person—that is an unqualified power on which I have already descanted—but can search him, but only

"with a view to exercising the said powers."

The excitement is now at fewer pitch. The subsection continues by stating that the purpose of searching him is to ascertain

"whether he has any munitions . . . or any transmitter with him."

Then, under subsection (3)*(b)* that member of Her Majesty's forces or constable can do something else, with a view to exercising the said powers. Again, he can search a person

"not in a public place"

—in fact, he can search him in a private place, but he must do that

"with a view to exercising the said powers."

At last, having cleared subsections (1), (2) and (3) of section 15 of the principal Act, we come to the answer to all our expectations, in subsection (4). What is the purpose of exercising the powers in subsection (4)? It is to seize any munitions found in the course of the search—unless it appears that they are being used for a lawful purpose—and, if necessary, to destroy them. Therefore, provided one intends conscientiously to seize and destroy munitions, one can do all the other things that are set out in the subsection.

But who can do that? I return for the umpteenth time to a study of subsection (4) which states that it is a member of Her Majesty's forces or a constable who is authorised to search any premises or other place or any person under the Act. I am told that they get that authorisation either under subsection (2), which refers to subsection (4), or in subsection (4) itself. Therefore, a person is authorised to do these things in subsection (4) provided that he is doing them for the purposes of subsection (4). This is the rummest of all pieces of drafting.

I am sure that the new clause has its value, even if it will not be accepted exactly as it stands, as I suspect it will not be, amidst such a cloud of difficulties. I hope that it will be taken by the Government as a signal that the parliamentary draftsman needs to take away this subsection from the principal Act, to make decent, logical, progressive sense of it, and not leave it in its present tumultuous position.

Mr. Scott: The power that is conferred on the RUC and members of the armed forces to stop any person in a public place and search him is wholly exceptional. I shall not follow the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) in his canter through the logical or illogical order in which the various powers are set out in section 15, but after the debate I shall study carefully what he has had to say. These powers are exceptional, which is why they are in the emergency provisions legislation with all the other exceptional provisions; why they are all kept under constant review; and why, if the Bill passes into law, they will have a maximum life of five years.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will simply recall that we amended section 15(4) in Committee to get rid of the particular difficulty about authorisation. That may meet one scintilla of his case. The House knows why these powers are necessary. Serious terrorist threats exist in Northern Ireland and the power to stop and search people is an important element of prevention and deterrence. It makes the terrorist aware that if he moves illicit material around, either on his person or in a vehicle, he is liable to be stopped and searched. If the new clause is accepted, it will weaken the ability of the security forces to deter and prevent such activity. It will remove what has been a serious constraint on the ability of terrorists to make preparations for terrorist attacks, whether by carrying firearms or explosives. That, in essence, is my case.

I know that difficulties arise, and I would be the last person to claim that the power has never been used unreasonably. I am sure that occasionally it has been abused. But the House knows that my ministerial colleagues and I are always ready to investigate genuine grievances. The fact that the security forces have this power is a considerable reassurance to the majority of people on both sides of the community in Northern Ireland who do not resent being stopped. Many of these stops are over in a matter of seconds—a minute or two at most — before those searched go on their way. I would equate it with the power to stop and search passengers before they board an aircraft flight. It is a measure of reassurance that others are being subjected to the same treatment and that everyone is in a greater state of safety as a result. It would not be right to remove that power from the security forces.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Is the Minister seriously saying that there should be a power to stop, but not to search? That is the point that is raised by new clause 10. At present, on any ordinary construction of section 15(3), that is exactly the law. There is a power to stop without searching.

Mr. Scott: It may well be that the sole purpose of stopping someone would be to establish his identity—to do what in common parlance in Northern Ireland is called a "P-check" — and let him go on his way without proceeding to search him. Under other powers, having searched and found something, the person may be arrested. There is a logical progression. Certainly there should be a power to stop people and establish their identity. This power has an important deterrent effect on the activities of terrorists, so I ask the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Had the Minister not sat down I would have referred him to section 18 of the 1978 Act, which states that a constable may stop and question any person for various purposes. Surely the Minister is not seriously saying that there should be a power per se to stop, unless the stopping is for the purpose of either questioning or searching.

Mr. Scott: In practice, the powers under section 15 would be used to search and those under section 18 to stop and question. That is absolutely fair. I told the right hon. Gentleman that we would consider the drafting, if that was the point at issue. I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was questioning generally whether there should be a power simply to stop.

Question put and negatived.

New clause 12

POWER TO STOP AND QUESTION

'In section 18(2) of the 1978 Act the words "to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or", and the words ", or both" shall be deleted.'.—*[Mr. Archer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Archer: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 29.

Mr. Archer: I am sorry that the literary style of new clause 10 did not meet with the approval of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and I hope that he finds new clause 12 more pleasing.

We continue to deal with the problems arising from the power to stop people and to do various other things to them, such as question or search them. Section 18 of the principal Act enables the forces to stop and question someone. Already we have found ourselves once again in difficulties about how these various powers fit together.

In Committee we observed that the obligation on a member of the public to answer questions put to him by members of the forces was a serious inroad into the right of silence which is a much vaunted feature of our constitution. We did not seek to remove the obligation, but we observed that the penalty for refusing to answer, which runs to a maximum of six months' imprisonment, seemed to be draconian. The new clause seeks to remove that penalty, leaving the alternative penalty of a fine of up to £400.

I note that in amendment No. 29 the Government have given us all that we asked for and more. I welcome the prospect of the Minister speaking to the amendment, so I shall not delay the House further.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: It would be churlish of me not to respond to the almost pathetic appeal which was addressed to me by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). I am afraid that my answer will disappoint him: I prefer Government amendment No. 29 to his new clause.

9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): As the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) has acknowledged, Government amendment No. 29 seeks to achieve the same effect as new clause 12. It makes two changes to section 18 of the 1978 Act, both of which arise from discussion in Committee. The first resolves the drafting point which was raised by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and makes it clear that the power to stop and question persons includes the power to ask what they know about any recent explosions and other recent incidents which have endangered life.

The second part of the amendment abolishes the penalty of imprisonment for the offence of failing to stop or refusing to answer questions. In Committee the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) raised this matter, and on consideration the Government agree that the penalty of imprisonment is disproportionate to the offence.

I am not sure whether the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West moved his new clause, but, in

[Dr. Brian Mawhinney]

the event that he did and that he now withdraws it, I should be happy formally to move amendment No. 29 at the end of this brief debate.

Mr. Archer: For the avoidance of doubt, may I say that it was not my intention to move the new clause.

Dr. Mawhinney: In that case, I move Government amendment No. 29——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Chair must deem that the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) moved his new clause. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman wish to withdraw his new clause?

Mr. Archer: Having got myself into a procedural difficulty, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) will be called in due course formally to move Government amendment No. 29.

New Clause 13

POWERS OF ARREST BY MEMBERS OF HER MAJESTY'S FORCES

"The following section shall be inserted after section 14(1) of the 1978 Act—

"(1A) No cause of action shall lie against a member of Her Majesty's forces below the rank of sergeant by reason only of the arrests without warrant of any person in circumstances where the arrest was carried out on the orders of a member of Her Majesty's forces of superior rank. It is hereby declared that in such circumstances, the member of superior rank shall be held responsible as if he had himself made the arrest.".'.—*[Mr. Archer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Archer: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In this debate we continue to grapple with the problems that arise from the various powers to stop and search, their proper construction, the conditions to which they are subject and their relationship to one another.

In paragraph 384, when discussing section 18, Sir George Baker related some of the problems of construction which arise, and he commented:

"Why should a soldier know what he can do if a lawyer does not?"

He was appealing for the powers to be clarified. That appeal was echoed by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). Sir George Baker claimed that they should be clarified in the interests of those who must operate them.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) commented that the power should be in a form which enabled instructions to be given to soldiers simply and clearly. They have neither the training nor the time to engage in academic speculation about problems of construction.

Reflecting on that, after the Committee stage, it struck the Opposition that a member of the armed forces of whatever rank, including a recently enlisted private, would be personally liable in civil proceedings for any restraint that he might place on a member of the public if it transpired that that restraint was not authorised by some statutory power. That would be the case even if he were acting on orders, if those orders were not authorised.

It may be said that that is a traditional way of dealing with such situations in the United Kingdom. Anyone who purports to act in pursuance of a power is personally answerable if that power does not exist. If we were dealing with a criminal offence, I would not seek to argue otherwise; but where we are concerned with actions for damages, the victim probably would not be troubled who paid the damages provided they were paid. It seems hard that a junior member of the forces, acting on orders, should be personally liable to an order for damages. It would impose a heavy obligation on a private to say that he should have recognised that the instructions that he received from a major were unlawful and that he should have refused to carry them out. I do not think that that would be realistic and I am not sure that it would be in the interests of good discipline if he were encouraged to speculate on such matters.

Any superior officer who gives an order which he is not authorised to give would be responsible to the victim since he would have made his subordinate his agent for that purpose. For the avoidance of doubt, we have sought in the new clause to declare that that should be the effect. The victim will not lose his remedy and justice will be done. The unfortunate individual at the receiving end of the unlawful order will be protected. That is the purpose of the new clause.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I found the new clause a most fascinating one to study, partly because the rank of sergeant seems to be the only one between private and brigadier that I did not occupy during the late hostilities. It is inherently strange that one should stop at the rank of sergeant in this business of transferring upwards through the ranks whatever liability is caught by the new clause. The distinction between a private and a lance corporal is one of the biggest chasms in the class systems which it is possible to cross, ought at least to have been recognised, if only in passing, by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

There is another difficulty. When the ball comes to rest with the sergeant, it is the member of superior rank who is to be held responsible. But what if it was a staff sergeant or a company sergeant major or a regimental sergeant major who gave the order? Will that be satisfactory? I noticed that a commissioned officer seemed to be in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's mind.

I am not sure whether the clause, in its present form, whatever might be the excellence of its intentions, is either fair in itself or likely to achieve its object. I imagine that in that respect I am at one with the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Scott: If the main object here is to protect the position of any victim of an action to ensure that proper recompense can be made, I can set at rest the mind of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) by saying that, if any civil action were taken, the Ministry of Defence would be vicariously liable, not officers of non-commissioned or commissioned rank. I hope that that will satisfy the right hon. and learned Gentleman and that there will be no need for him to pursue the new clause.

Mr. Archer: I am not sure that I am wholly convinced but I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 14

EXERCISE OF ARREST POWERS

'The following section shall be inserted after section 20(8) of the 1978 Act—

"(8A) No detention or arrest without warrant of a person which is incidental to the exercise of a power contained in this Part of this Act shall be deemed to be authorised unless it is reasonable in all the circumstances, and does not exceed a period of four hours.".'.—*[Mr. Archer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Archer: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I looked somewhat surprised because I was not expecting to have to move this new clause, but it seems that I am left holding whatever baby is enshrined in it. Not only can I speak briefly; I have to.

In Committee, a discussion arose about what we might call incidental powers to detain people when, for example, in the course of the search of premises they sought to interfere wth the search, or it became necessary in some way to restrain them in order that the search could proceed, or when exercising any of the other powers in the principal Act it became necessary as an incident to the exercise of those powers to restrain someone.

My recollection is that the Minister of State, helpfully setting out the position as he understood it, said that one does not need to spell out all those powers specifically because they are incidental to the exercise of the powers which are given and therefore they are implied. Someone —it may have been the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell)—asked whether that was a rather dangerous way to proceed and whether it would be better to spell out the powers so that we would know precisely what their limits were and the conditions to which they were subject.

The purpose of this new clause is to meet that problem. It may not be all that specific, but it is intended to say that powers which are exercised as being incidental to other powers set out in the principal Act shall be exercised reasonably.

Mr. Scott: There are two elements in the new clause. The first concerns the incidental powers, and the second concerns the time limits themselves. My concern on time limits is that the proposed new clause could turn out to be counter-productive in that the time limit which it spells out might easily become the norm. I am legally advised that the rest of the new clause is unnecessary because any incidental power to detain a person while he, his home or vehicle is searched, or while he is answering questions put to him under section 18, is already constrained by the requirement that it should be reasonable in all circumstances. Therefore, the new clause is unnecessary.

Mr. Archer: Again, I am not sure whether I have wholly taken in the Minister's argument or whether I wholly concur with it. I believe that it is a matter to which we should all give much more careful consideration than seems possible at this stage. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

LIMITATION OF POWER TO GRANT BAIL IN CASE OF SCHEDULED OFFENCES

Mr. Scott: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 11, after '(1)', insert

'Subject to subsection (6) below,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendment No. 4.

Amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 33, at end insert

', or

(c) who was a serving member of any of Her Majesty's forces, or a serving member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, and on duty, at the time of the commission of the alleged offence.'.

Government amendment No. 6.

Mr. Scott: In Committee some concerns were expressed about the position of serving members of the security forces under section 2. In giving effect to Sir George Baker's recommendation that members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the RUC Reserve should be put on the same footing as serving members of Her Majesty's forces, the Government's intention — as I told the Committee — was that a magistrate should be able to bail serving members of the security forces into military or police custody as appropriate. The option of bail into military or police custody would be available only where the scheduled offence was alleged to have been committed in connection with the duties of the soldier or policeman.

Some hon. Members — notably the right hon. and learned Member for Warley West (Mr. Archer), the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) — pointed out that the clause as drafted goes further than this: it would exclude, in its present form, serving members of the security forces altogether from the scope of section 2. This has, of course, been the position in regard to serving soldiers since the bail restrictions were first introduced in 1973, and I am not aware that this has caused any difficulties in practice. However, the Government accept that the clause needs tightening up. These amendments therefore provide that a magistrate may grant bail to a serving member of the security forces only if he is satisfied that the person concerned can be held in military or police custody, and the magistrate must impose a condition that he is to be held in such custody. If military custody were not available, or the policeman or soldier wanted to apply to be released from all custody on bail, he would be subject to the same restrictions concerning bail as any other person charged with a scheduled offence.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I welcome Government amendment No. 1 without reservation. However, the Minister will recall that in Committee we were concerned about the clear distinction between the treatment of a member of the security forces or a soldier who was on duty, and one who was not. I think that I prefer the wording in amendment No. 5 to the wording in Government amendment No. 6, but I shall not pursue that. I shall not move amendment No. 5, and I accept the other amendments.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: At an earlier stage in our proceedings the Minister seemed somewhat aggrieved that

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

his efforts to meet points made in Committee were not receiving the recognition that they deserved. I hope that we shall now be able to glut the Minister with good things. I recognise that Government amendment No. 6 fully spells out, as it should be, spelt out on the face of a statute, the intentions as they were explained by the Minister to the Committee on that occasion.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Archer: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 1, leave out 'may, in his discretion,' and insert 'shall'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendment No. 2A.

Amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 13, at end insert—

'(3) In exercising his discretion the judge shall have regard to all the circumstances of the case including:

(a) the nature and seriousness of the offence charged;

(b) the character, antecedents, associations and community ties of the defendant;

(c) the nature of the evidence;

(d) the time spent or likely to be spent in custody if bail is refused.'.

Mr. Archer: In Committee we explored with some thoroughness clause 1 and debated it at some length again earlier this evening. It is the clause relating to bail. Widespread concern was expressed today, as it was in Committee, that people who had not been convicted of any offence might be detained in custody, awaiting trial, for what could be the equivalent of a substantial custodial sentence.

I do not propose to detail all the matters that were explored in Committee and in the earlier debate, but two things in particular exercised some of us. In paragraph 81 Sir George Baker recommended that the judge, in considering whether to grant bail, should be declared to have a wide discretion and should be given guidelines about the matters that he may take into account. That was the purpose of our amendment No. 3. It is reflected, and perhaps more brilliantly reflected, in Government amendment No. 2A. We are grateful to the Government for responding to what we said and I do not seek to take that matter any further.

9.15 pm

The other matter that concerned us was the imbalance between the granting and the refusing of bail. Clause 1 provides that if certain matters are established the court must refuse bail, but that if they are not established it may grant bail. That seemed strange to us, because we had assumed that matters that the Government regarded as obstacles to bail would be listed in the clause. If none of them is established, it is not easy to understand why bail should not be granted.

If it is said that the judge should have a residual discretion, it is not clear why he should not have a discretion both ways. We were prepared to consider resolving the asymmetry by providing that in either event the judge should have a discretion. However, we discovered that there was a procedural problem about the amendment, because it would make nonsense of the clause. It would have said that the clause provided that the judge should have a discretion whether or not any of the listed objections were established. We moved the amendment to remove the discretion in either case so that the House could have an opportunity to discuss the matter.

Having explained that, I would respond sympathetically if the Government were to say that they will redraft the Bill to resolve the asymmetry by providing that there should be a discretion both ways, rather than only one way. I do not propose to repeat all the arguments that were ventilated in Committee. I think that I have explained the purpose of the amendment.

Mr. Scott: On reflection, the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) feels that Government amendment No 2A fulfils the undertaking that I gave in Committee and is an important step forward. What we have sought to do is to introduce into the clause a list of the considerations to which the judge, in exercising his discretion about bail, can direct his attention. I shall come to the point of the Opposition amendment in a moment.

I should make it clear that this list is not intended to be exhaustive, but I got the feeling in Committee that hon. Members would welcome matters being spelt out at somewhat greater length. Of course, the judge can take into account other factors that are not included in the Government amendment, so we are not limiting or indeed extending the judge's existing total discretion in these matters. Having reflected on this matter, the Government came to the conclusion that it would be wrong to make the grant of bail mandatory if none of the conditions in the new section 2(2) applies. The point here is that we feel that our emergency legislation should interfere as little as possible with the operations of the ordinary law in Northern Ireland.

I am afraid that there is a pressing security-related need for special restrictions to apply to the grant of bail in scheduled cases in Northern Ireland. Where those restrictions do not apply, the ordinary law of bail, which in Northern Ireland is common law, should continue to operate. It is that common law that gives the judge unfettered discretion. If he had to grant bail where none of the stated conditions applied it would, in theory, be because the judge has been forced to grant bail to a person accused of a scheduled offence in circumstances where a magistrate might well have decided to refuse bail to someone accused of a non-scheduled offence.

Therefore, the Government's view is that it is right not to use the emergency law to interfere with the operation of the ordinary law on the granting of bail in Northern Ireland. I hope that the House will agree that the incorporation of considerations on the lines proposed in the amendment is an honest attempt to meet the concern that was expressed on this point in Committee.

Mr. Archer: That is what the Minister said in Committee. I do not find it any more persuasive now than I did when he said it in Committee, but I am conscious of the fact that the Government obviously addressed their mind to our arguments on this whole matter. They have responded admirably to one of our arguments and it would be churlish of me to proceed with the other one. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 2A, in page 2, line 13, at end insert—

'(2a) In exercising his descretion in accordance with subsection (2) above in relation to a person, a judge shall have regard to such of the following considerations as appear to him to be relevant, namely—

(a) the nature and seriousness of the offence with which the person is charged.

(b) the character, antecedents, associations and community ties of the person,

(c) the time which the person has already spent in custody and the time which he is likely to spend in custody if he is not admitted to bail, and

(d) the strength of the evidence of his having committed the offence,

as well as to any others which appear to be relevant.'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 23, leave out from 'fourteen' to end of line 27.

No. 6, in page 2, line 33, at end insert—

'(6) Subsection (1) above shall not preclude a resident magistrate from admitting to bail a person to whom this section applies if—

(a) the person is a serving member of any of Her Majesty's forces or a serving member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, and

(b) the resident magistrate is satisfied that suitable arrangements have been made for the person to be held in military or (as the case may be) police custody, and imposes a condition on admitting him to bail that he is to be held in such custody.'.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Mr. Archer: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 4, line 6, at end insert—

'(3) Where in any such proceedings the prosecution proposes to give, or (as the case may be) has given, in evidence a statement made by the accused, and it appears to the court that, having regard to the circumstances in which the statement was obtained, its admission in evidence would have such an adverse effect on the fairness of the proceedings that the court ought not to admit it, then the court shall do one of the things mentioned in subsection (2)(i) to (iii) above.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 24, in page 11, line 27, at end insert—

'(12) Where a court finds that the powers conferred by subsections (7) and (10) above have been exercised unreasonably, any statement by the accused obtained in the absence of a solicitor shall be deemed inadmissible in evidence.'.

Mr. Archer: I asked my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) whether he would speak to these amendments. He kindly said that he would, but we then discovered a procedural difficulty because the amendments were not tabled in his name. May I deal with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by moving the amendments formally and leaving my hon. Friend to ventilate the arguments about them?

Mr. Winnick: No one underestimates the difficulties that one faces when dealing with matters of justice in Northern Ireland. Much of what we have debated this evening arises from the situation in the Province. Undoubtedly the terrorist campaign is a factor that affects those who are charged with various offences. However, that makes it all the more important that justice is seen to be done in Northern Ireland. Surely it is only in the interests of the terrorists, from whichever side of the sectarian divide they may come, to be able effectively to question the way in which the courts and justice in general operate there. If the terrorists discern doubts in the minds of those who are not in their ranks, that is clearly a victory for them.

The purpose of the amendments is to eliminate the possibility of unfair convictions as a result of improperly obtained confessions. Our argument is based to a large extent on section 76 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. In Committee, the Solicitor-General referred to the circumstances of Northern Ireland when dealing with this aspect of the 1984 Act. He said:

"it should be open to a court to admit a confession statement notwithstanding that there is a taint, a hint, the merest vestige of unfairness to the accused or a hint, a taint, the merest vestige of a fact that it would be otherwise adverse to the interests of justice."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 29 January 1987; c. 93.]

We can hardly be happy with that interpretation of such an important matter. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said in Committee, the Solicitor-General was making a startling proposition. I am not a lawyer, but I certainly believe in the rule of law. The view that was expressed by the Solicitor-General did not strike much confidence in me. I do not know what it would lead to for people in Northern Ireland. What the Solicitor-General's remarks come down to is this: "Well, it does not really matter at the end of the day, in view of the circumstances in the Province, if there is a wee bit of unfairness towards the accused, or if it is adverse to the interests of justice in some other way. Let it pass." We strongly disagree with that point of view.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred on numerous occasions to the importance of the rule of law. Even faced with a sustained terrorist campaign, the rule of law should apply in Northern Ireland. That is why we believe that the amendments are necessary.

I return to the main point of the amendment—that "having regard to the circumstances in which the statement was obtained its admission in evidence would have such an adverse effect on the fairness of the proceedings" that we believe that the court should not admit it. If it is clear that the accused's statement was obtained by means that would not be allowed in court on the mainland, it should not be allowed by a court in Northern Ireland. Amendment No. 24, which calls for the presence of a solicitor when a prisoner is questioned by the police, is self-explanatory.

These amendments are necessary. Terrorists should not be able to argue that they cannot rely on the courts and justice in the Province. It should not be thought in the Irish Republic or in any other country that circumstances in Northern Ireland are such that we have abandoned the rule of law. If certain provisions as laid down in the 1984 Act should apply in the United Kingdom, they should apply to the whole of the United Kingdom. The Solicitor-General placed great emphasis on the word "may". It is up to the courts to decide. We know how courts, in the main, decide in Britain. The position should be the same in Northern Ireland.

For those reasons, I believe that the amendments should be supported.

Mr. Scott: I find it difficult to disagree with many of the comments of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), which makes it all the sadder that I have to advise the House to reject both amendments.

Amendment No. 9 would remove from judges in Northern Ireland the discretion which Sir George Baker found that they were in practice exercising fairly to exclude confession evidence in the interests of fairness. It would make the exclusion or disregarding of evidence or the

[Mr. Scott]

ordering of a new trial mandatory, not discretionary, where the courts find that it would be unfair to admit it. This is not a matter in which a mandatory provision such as this would be appropriate, because it must be for the courts, in considering the whole position, to decide whether the circumstances are such that they should take one of the specified courses. I do not think that the amendment would help the courts in deciding when the circumstances were such that they should require exclusion.

Broadly, the Government are satisfied that Sir George Baker was correct in concluding that the exercise of this discretion by the judge operates well. We do not seek to change the practice of the courts. It is therefore right that new section 8(3) should be declaratory, as Sir George Baker recommended. We agree with him that the courts have interpreted section 8 fairly and sensibly in a way that fully protects the rights of defendants in Northern Ireland. Clause 4, as drafted, seeks to put that practice on a statutory basis. The amendments would go further than that and, in doing so, disturb the careful balance that has to be struck between the rights of the accused and the rights of society as a whole to expect authorities to deal effectively with terrorism by bringing terrorists to justice before the courts.

Amendment No. 24 would require a court to exclude a statement made by a person in police custody if the police had unreasonably exercised their power under clause 13(7)—the power to delay access to a solicitor or to direct that consultation take place in the presence of a police officer. It is better that this matter should not be left to the discretion of the judge. He has the discretion, to which the hon. Member for Walsall, North referred, to exclude any statement to avoid unfairness to the accused or otherwise in the interests of justice. Anyone who has studied the practice of the courts in Northern Ireland in recent years could not conclude other than that they have operated this fairly and in the interests of the accused.

I must therefore ask the House not to change the present arrangements and to reject the two amendments.

Mr. Archer: Trying to be objective, I am bound to say that, by any test of logic, my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) had the better of that exchange. This is not a matter on which we feel so strongly that it would be right to divide the House at this hour. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 8

EXTENSION OF CATEGORIES OF PERSONS ABOUT WHOM IT IS UNLAWFUL TO COLLECT INFORMATION

9.30 pm

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 5, line 6, leave out from beginning to first 'any' in line 11 and insert

'*(b)* after paragraph *(d)* there shall be added "; and

(e)".

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take the following amendments: No. 11, in page 5, line 6, leave out 'paragraphs' and insert 'paragraph.'.

No. 12, in page 5, leave out line 7.

No. 13, in page 5, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 10.

Dr. Mawhinney: I note that the Government amendment is paralleled by the amendment tabled by the official Opposition and the Official Unionists.

When clause 8 was discussed in Committee, the two members of the Committee most closely concerned were the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). Both selflessly and passionately rejected the proposal that section 22(2) of the 1978 Act should be extended so that elected representatives in Northern Ireland were afforded a protection not shared by their constituents. In the light of their reaction, the Government have reconsidered the clause and decided that the only extension should be to include former members of the categories already listed in section 22(2), namely, the security forces, the prison service, the judiciary and officers of the court.

Mr. Archer: I rise only to say that I endorse all that the Minister has just said. In the circumstances I do not propose to move our amendment.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: This is one of the many matters in which a degree of unanimity, which perhaps surprised members of the Committee, was achieved as a result of our discussions. It remains for me to add only that, having further consulted my colleagues, I found them fully in agreement with the line that I took in Committee. We therefore welcome the Government amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9

OFFENCES RELATING TO BEHAVIOUR AND DRESS IN PUBLIC PLACES

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No.14, in page 5, leave out lines 13 to 15 and insert—

"*Display of support in public for a proscribed organisation.*

'9—(1) The following section shall be substitued for section 25 of the 1978 Act—

25. Any person who in a public place—

(a) wears any item of dress; or

(b) wears, carries or displays any article,

in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable apprehension that he is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation, shall be liable—

(i) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six moths or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or both;

(ii) on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to a fine, or both.".'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take Government amendment No. 15.

Dr. Mawhinney: Amendment No. 14 redefines the offence under section 25 of the 1978 Act so that it is now identical to the equivalent offence in Great Britain under section 2(1) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) questioned how the original form of the provision, which refers to a person behaving in such a way as to arouse reasonable apprehension that he is a supporter of a proscribed organisation, might be interpreted. The amendment narrows the offence to

certain types of behaviour — wearing, carrying or displaying any article that is likely to arouse such apprehension—and so removes some areas of doubt.

Amendment No. 15 is purely consequential.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 5, line 16, leave out 'that section and in'.

Clause 11

Expiry and eventual repeal of 1978 Act

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 9, line 5, at end insert—

'(10) The repeal of the 1978 Act shall not affect the application of any provision of sections 28 and 28A of that Act in relation to any right to compensation under section 28 which arises before the date when the repeal takes effect.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take Government amendment No. 26.

Dr. Mawhinney: The amendment safeguards the position of any person who suffers damage or loss through an action taken under the Act before its repeal. If a person has a claim outstanding when the repeal takes effect, that claim will continue to be dealt with as if the Act was still in force. Similarly, if a person has suffered loss or damage and has not yet made a claim, he may make his application after the repeal, provided that he does so within the time limit provided in section 28.

Amendment No. 26 simply provides that new subsection (10) shall not itself be repealed when the 1978 Act is repealed.

These are straightforward amendments, and I trust that they will command the support of the House.

Ms. Clare Short: I echo the words of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). In Committee, it was surprising how much we agreed on, despite the varying views that were taken. I think that there is a case for discussing some of the legislation in detail. The convergence of views is encouraging for the democratic process. This is not a controversial Government amendment. It protects those who need to be compensated for the damage that they have suffered as a consequence of the unhappy politics in Northern Ireland. The Opposition, therefore, accept the Government amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 12

Right to have someone informed of detention under terrorism provisions

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 9, line 13, at end insert—

'(1A) A person shall be informed of the right conferred on him by subsection (1) as soon as practicable after he has become a person to whom that subsection applies.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 22.

Dr. Mawhinney: In Committee, the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) moved an amendment requiring that a person on whom statutory rights are conferred — clauses 12 and 13 — should be informed of these rights. I should emphasise, as did my hon. Friend the Minister of State in Committee, that in practice when a person is arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 or for any scheduled offence the RUC is careful to ensure that he is aware of his rights, and it provides him with a card setting out those rights. However, the Government accept that it would be appropriate to set out on the face of the Bill the requirement to inform a detained person of his rights, and these amendments to clauses 12 and 13 achieve that aim. I commend them to the House.

Mr. McWilliam: I thank the Minister for putting into legislation the undertaking that was given in Committee. It was a serious debate. We felt very strongly about this matter, and the new wording fully brings the Bill into line with what we discussed in Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Dr. Mawhinney: I beg to move amendment No. 20, in page 9, line 22, leave out from 'period' to end of line 24 and insert

'referred to in subsection (4A)'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 21 and 23.

Dr. Mawhinney: These amendments are intended to meet the criticism that was made in Committee by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) that the wording of clauses 12 and 13 concerning the maximum period for which the exercise of the rights conferred by those clauses may be delayed was ambiguous, or at least unclear. The amendments do not change the substance of the provision for delay, but they show more clearly the extent of the permitted delay. Where the detained person was being examined before his detention in accordance with an order under section 13 of the 1984 Act — for example, by an examining officer at a seaport or airport — the period of 48 hours runs from the start of the examination. In all other cases, the period of 48 hours runs from the time that the person was detained.

I trust that the House will welcome these amendments in the interest of clarification.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I am in duty bound to express satisfaction with the amendment. It does not often fall to us to get the better of a parliamentary draftsman. On the rare occasions when we do, the draftsmen are always very generous and ready to come to our aid with an even better proposal than that which we had put forward. This, for me, will remain one of those occasions.

Mr. McWilliam: I echo what has been said by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). It was a pleasure to serve on the Committee. The debates about draftsmanship were at least as interesting as the debates about the substance of the Bill. I welcome the amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No 21, in page 9, line 24, at end insert—

'(4A) That period is—

(a) (except where paragraph *(b)* applies) the period of 48 hours beginning with the time when the detained person was first detained under the terrorism provisions;

(b) where the detained person was, prior to the time when he was first so detained being examined in accordance with any order under section 13 of the

[Mr. McWilliam]

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, the period of 48 hours beginning with the time when he was first so examined.'.

Clause 13

RIGHT OF ACCESS TO LEGAL ADVICE

Amendments made: No. 22, in page 10, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) A person shall be informed of the right conferred on him by subsection (1) as soon as practicable after he has become a person to whom that subsection applies.'.

No 23, in page 10, line 30, leave out from 'period' to '; or' in line 32 and insert 'referred to in section 12(4A)'.—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Clause 24

COMMENCEMENT, EXPIRY, REVIVAL AND EVENTUAL REPEAL OF ACT

Amendment made: No. 26, in page 17, line 5, leave out '(9)' and insert '(10)'.—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Schedule 1

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I beg to move amendment No. 28, in page 18, line 31, at end insert—

'*(a)* he may detain all or any of the persons found on those premises for the duration of the search.'.

During the debate in Committee, hon. Members on both sides were startled to discover that the power to search premises was thought by implication to include a power to detain persons, other than the particular person who was the object of the search, who might be present on those premises at the time. There was a general feeling that if that power was implicit, it ought to be made explicit in the terms of the statute, and in particular that the length of any such detention should be limited. That anxiety had been expressed by Sir George Baker in his report.

In Committee, we considered whether it was practicable to provide a four-hour period of detention in those circumstances, but upon consideration it seems more reasonable that the power to detain, without which some searches would be physically impracticable or liable to frustration, ought to be limited to the duration of the search itself. I hope that that will be found acceptable to the Government.

It may be that the interpretation is correct, that a power to search implies the power to direct any person not to leave the premises or to move from one part of the premises to another, but, in the light of the tense circumstances in which those powers are exercised, I hope that the Government will agree that it would be far better, as a minor amendment, if those powers were set out precisely on the face of the statute.

Mr. Scott: In view of all the pleasant things that have been said during the course of this stage of the consideration of the Bill about the confluence of views and so on, it would be nice if, on this last amendment, it was possible for me to accept the reasonable point that has been put by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). However, I am afraid that I have to act the hard man for once, and reiterate what I said in Committee when a similar amendment backed by the right hon. Gentleman was under consideration.

It is quite clear in law that the statutory power to enter and search premises does implicitly carry with it the power to do anything that is reasonably necessary to achieve the object of the search. There are other statutes that confer such powers — for example, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Criminal Law Act 1967, and drugs legislation—but nowhere do they spell out the ancillary steps that may be taken in order to make a search effective. Therefore, although the right hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable case, it would be odd to single out searches under this particular piece of legislation in the way proposed by the amendment when it is not reflected in other legislation that provides the power to search. Therefore, I have to ask the right hon. Gentleman to consider withdrawing his amendment.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: There may be a disadvantage in varying in this instance from the conferment of powers to search in other statutory contexts. Therefore, although I think that there is some danger attendant upon the exercise of a power to search without specific power to do those various things in the course of a search, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 29, in page 18, line 40, at end insert—

'. In section 18 (power to stop and question)—

(a) in subsection (1)*(b)*, after "other" insert "recent"; and

(b) in subsection (2), for the words from "imprisonment" onwards substitute "a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.".'.

No. 31, in page 18, line 41, at end insert—

'. In section 32 (orders and regulations)—

(a) in subsection (1), after "orders conferred by" insert "section 19A above and";

(b) in subsection (3), for the words from the beginning to "Schedules)" substitute "Subject to subsection (5) below, no order or regulations under this Act";

(c) in subsection (4), for the words from the beginning to "approved) shall" substitute "Subject to subsection (5) below, orders and regulations under this Act shall, if not so approved in draft,"; and

(d) after that subsection add—

"(5) Subsections (3) and (4) above do not apply to—

(a) any order under section 19A above or under Schedule 1 or 3 to this Act; or

(b) any regulations under section 5A above;

but a statutory instrument containing any such regulations shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.".'.—*[Dr. Mawhinney.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

9.43 pm

Mr. Scott: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

There are two points that I should like to put on record at this stage of the Bill that I hope will show the willingness of the Government to respond to some of the views put forward in Committee.

Those right hon. and hon. Members who served on the Committee will recall the general concern that was expressed during the course of our discussions to ensure that Parliament was able to scrutinise effectively the emergency provisions legislation on the occasion of the

annual renewal debates. I gave certain assurances about the provision of extra information—for example, that the Government would provide what statistical information was available. However, I believe that it would be for the assistance of the House, and, indeed, the other place, if, each year, a more objective assessment of the way in which the legislation had been operating could be prepared. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is therefore considering whether it might be right to ask an independent person of standing to conduct a review and prepare a report for Parliament. I hope that that will facilitate the House in coming to a view about the way in which the Act is working.

The House will recall that we will renew the Act on an annual basis and that it has an overall life of five years. In Committee I was anxious to ensure that that annual review was as meaningful and penetrating as possible. I hope that if my right hon. Friend decides that eventually that is the right course to take, that approach will commend itself to the House. I shall be glad to take account of anything that is said in response to that during this Third Reading debate.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend and I acknowledge the desirability of providing a clear statement of the powers available to the security forces under the emergency legislation and giving a clear indication of the ways in which those powers should be exercised. As I said in Committee, it is the Government's intention to introduce for Northern Ireland, by Order in Council, provisions equivalent to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, including provisions requiring the introduction of codes of practice equivalent to those drawn up under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Those codes would be of general application.

However, it is clear that codes directly equivalent to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act codes would not bite on the exercise of emergency powers. Code A, for example, deals with powers of search that are exercised on the basis of "reasonable grounds for suspicion", whereas some of those in the emergency provisons Act are exercised in order to "ascertain whether" munitions and so on are present. There are similar limitations on the other codes.

We believe that what is required is a separate code of practice governing the exercise of powers under the emergency legislation. The Government, therefore, intend to introduce a code of practice for the exercise of emergency powers in Northern Ireland. The code will not be a statutory code. We believe that such a code will be in the best interests of the security forces by contributing to greater understanding and confidence between them and the general public. It will also be in the interests of the general public to have a clear statement of the security forces' powers and of the way in which those powers should be operated.

I should like to reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier. I compliment all those who played any part in the earlier stages of the Bill on the constructive way in which they approached it. We improved the legislation substantially on its way through Committee. I hope that the Government have been seen to respond positively and constructively both in Committee and today on the Floor of the House.

9.47 pm

Mr. Archer: This is not the time to embark on a further debate, and I do not propose to do so. However, I endorse what the Minister said in his final remarks. On Second Reading I called the Bill a mixed bag because I could not think of a more elegant expression on the spur of the moment. I said that we would place no impediment in the Government's path when they introduced progressive measures. The Bill represents an improvement in a number of respects on the previous law, and I hope that we shall continue to encourage the Government in well doing.

We have debated the less attractive parts of the Bill. That was possible because the Government introduced the provisions by way of a Bill, not by unamendable orders. I imagine that that was because the Government had to do it in that way, and not because they had acquired a sudden aversion to unamendable orders, although I might wish that it were otherwise.

We have had profitable debates. We have not reached unanimity, but we have directed our minds to one another's arguments and I believe that the Bill is better in consequence. Even at this late stage, the Minister has given us two items of good news. I shall not attempt to react to them now. In any event, it may be better to reflect on them before we say any more, but good news they certainly are. I, too, pay tribute to all those who have contributed to our debates. We have had enjoyable and useful debates and I hope that we shall have such debates more often.

9.49 pm

Mr. Molyneaux: During the day we on this Bench have been asked why we are participating in the debate. The answer will be obvious to some, but not to all. It will not be obvious to all, because those who were elected to this House in 1983 from all parts of the United Kingdom have probably never seen Northern Ireland legislation being treated in the normal way by a Bill and not by an Order in Council. This has been a lesson for all of us who have been present in the Chamber since the debate began in mid-afternoon and for those in the Palace of Westminster who occasionally looked in upon our deliberations. We are grateful for that passing interest.

The House has been inquiring how these complex issues could have been dealt with by an Order in Council. You, Mr. Speaker, know very well what would have happened had this been an Order in Council instead of a Second Reading, a Committee stage upstairs and now Report and Third Reading on the Floor of the House. We would have had a debate of 90 minutes, two fairly lengthy opening speeches, a limited number of contributions, a curious eagerness on the part of the Minister replying to encourage as many contributions as possible, and then, not surprisingly, find that he had insufficient time to deal with the many points that had been raised. He would then offer the consolation that he would write to every hon. Member who had raised points in the course of the debate.

In his earlier contributions to the debate, the Secretary of State expressed appreciation of the privilege that had been his of reading the *Hansard* reports of the Committee stage and of being here — like myself — at a comparatively late stage in the proceedings having followed those earlier discussions in Committee. The Secretary of State said that the House had benefited from the debate being taken on the Floor of the House this afternoon and this evening. He is in the very happy position of being able to perpetuate that sense of privilege and pleasure by simply deciding that from henceforth all major Northern Ireland legislation will be treated by Bills in the normal way and not by Order in Council.

[Mr. Molyneaux]

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) reminded us that the Bill is merely one part of the necessary legislative armoury, given that the emergency may continue for some considerable time. Even that armoury in total will make no significant impact upon the continuing terrorist campaign. It is continuing, because there has been no reduction in violence since the year in which the present Parliament was elected and since the present Government were reinstalled in office in 1983.

Far from a reduction, the violence has increased, despite the fact that in a press release on 15 November 1985 — a year and a half ago — the Prime Minister explained and justified her reasons for signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement in the following terms:

"I entered into this agreement because I was not prepared to tolerate a situation of continuing violence."

After a year and a half of experimentation and unfounded optimism, the Prime Minister is still tolerating that continuing violence. We would not unreasonably ask from this Bench, "How long is she prepared to tolerate it?"

While the Committee has laboured diligently, and the debate in the House has to some extent supplemented the Committee's work, and while I join in the tributes paid to those who served on the Committee, it is my clear duty to warn the House that if and when the Bill receives the Royal Assent the effect on murder and destruction will be very marginal indeed.

I shall not transgress by dealing with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The less said about cases of terminal illness, the better. Because we are considering a measure that deals with security, or the lack of it — a measure that will become part of a larger apparatus — we should not deceive ourselves or the country by subscribing to the mere superstition that any promises of co-operation from any Dublin Government who depend upon the life support system of one or two mavericks in the Dail will ever make a significant contribution to eradicating terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Recently, the Prime Minister took issue with me when I said that at least 18 people had been murdered in the first three months of this year. She said that some victims of the strife were members of the so-called Irish National Liberation Army, to which I must reply, "So what?" She ignored the fact that those murdering one another had crossed and recrossed the frontier to commit those crimes. Although I do not wish to disillusion and dishearten those who served on the Committee or who contributed to the debate today by suggesting that their work has been in vain, I should say that unless Her Majesty's Government bring themselves to recognise that they must recast their entire political, economic and security strategy, it will have been in vain.

The Secretary of State quoted Sir George Baker's conclusion at page 71 of the report, which stated:

"If 'doomsday' arrives in whatever form it will be the duty of the then Government to bring any necessary legislation before Parliament immediately."

There is a real fear in many minds that the Province is careering towards "doomsday". In words slightly different from those used by Sir George Baker, I say with the support of my colleagues on this Bench that it is the duty of the Government to free themselves at long last from the shackles imposed by the Anglo-Irish Agreement and, as Her Majesty's Government, to take single-handedly such action as may be necessary to arrest the drift that has gone on for far too long.

9.57 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison: It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who has borne many burdens in a tortured Province with courage, humility and patience. I heartily agreed when he said that he was glad that the legislation was in the form of a Bill. Many Conservative and Unionist Members agree that, as far as possible, Northern Ireland legislation should be conducted like other legislation and that Northern Ireland should be treated as though it was truly part of the United Kingdom. But I assure my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that I shall not comment on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. My views on it are known to the House.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) rightly commented on the amenity of our debates on the Bill. His attitude and speeches contributed greatly to that amenity. What has also been agreeable is the way in which nationalist and Ulster Unionist Members have taken part in our debates in Committee and on the Floor of the House and have been in full agreement on some amendments and new clauses. This one Parliament of the United Kingdom is where dialogue can take place between nationalist and Unionist as it has not always taken place in assemblies constructed artificially across the water. There has been unity——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Although there have been differences, there has been unity in the House and in Committee on the desire that as soon as possible emergency powers should be dispensed with. In all quarters of the Standing Committee and in the House there have been diligent searches to find ways in which the powers can be lessened or softened without prejudice to that supreme interest—the safety of the subject.

I support the Third Reading and congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Bill.

10.1 pm

Mr. Alton: I shall not disappoint the Government and Opposition Whips who wish to commence the debate on the next business as close to 10 o'clock as possible.

I agree with the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) about the unanimity in the Chamber today. Although I could not be a member of the Standing Committee, it is clear from the debate that an attitude of partnership prevailed there and that the Government conceded some of the suggestions. I am grateful to them for that.

Today's debate has demonstrated that when hon. Members come to this Chamber it is possible for them to

argue their case and to ensure that the legitimate views of the Unionist majority can be put forward in a place where they will be listened to. If there is to be any hope in Northern Ireland, it is vital that debate should take place in the Chamber and not on the streets of Belfast. Therefore, it was conforting to hear the remarks of several Unionist Members but especially those of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who always speaks with enormous sincerity and considerable force about the problems facing the Province.

If there is to be dialogue in the Chamber and partnership amongst parties in trying to ensure that there is victory over the IRA and other terrorist groups, there must be cross-border co-operation. That is why I believe the Government's strategy of endeavouring to achieve agreement across the border through cross-border co-operation on security is right. The tragedy of the last 18 months, to which the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley referred, is a tragedy not just of the last 18 months but of the last 18 years almost during which 2,500 people have died, of whom 200 were from the security forces, and 24,000 have been injured. That is why there is such a desperate need for co-operation on both sides of the border to achieve the objectives enunciated during today's debate.

I am glad to associate myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends with the Bill. We wish it were not necessary to have emergency powers legislation. We wish it were possible to have fewer Orders in Council and more opportunities like this to debate the issues across the Floor of the House, but we recognise the special circumstances in Northern Ireland. For that reason, we will not oppose the Government tonight.

10.3 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): The people of Northern Ireland have been told by the Government that this Bill will

"make possible the effective pursuit of terrorism".

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State told the House that it was the Government's

"determination to pursue the campaign to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the . . . Province". — [*Official Report*, 16 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. 1084.]

How often have the Government said that from the Dispatch Box during the past 18 years? More times than I care to remember. Ironically, it is most emphatically declared immediately after some fresh horrendous terrorist atrocity in Northern Ireland. When such declarations are made by Government spokesmen, they are usually made in ringing tones to emphasise the Government's determination and resolution.

However, the truth is that it is the members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Army who have to face the relentless campaign of violence and death at the hands of the evil men who, for too long, have paraded and damned the face of Ulster. That truth is known throughout the length and breadth of Northern Ireland. Of course, it does not stop there. Every decent law-abiding citizen lives under the shadow of death from the bomb and the bullet of the Provisional IRA gunmen. In that, I include any other terrorist, no matter what his political aspirations or religious affiliations.

I do not believe that this Bill will protect individuals in Northern Ireland from the terrorists. Having listened to the speeches today, I have come to the conclusion that the Bill is a nice exercise in British statesmanship, showing how moderate the English are. I doubt whether the French, the Germans, the Japanese or any other people who are subjected to terrorism would have given way to some of the expressions that I have heard in the House today.

However, at least this debate gives me the opportunity to pay another tribute to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, to those gallant men who live in Northern Ireland and whose wives and children are in Northern Ireland and are all too easily a target for the IRA. I pay tribute to them and to the regular members of the Army and the UDR.

It is ironic that the Irish Republic, which the Government tell us is more committed than ever before to fighting IRA terrorists in conjunction with the United Kingdom, delivers the most thunderous protests to London whenever a British soldier wanders a few yards across the border on to Republican soil. The Irish Republic is jealous of its territory. I wish that the United Kingdom was jealous about the territory of Northern Ireland and made sure that the Irish Republic abandoned its claim to be part of the United Kingdom.

However, what sickens me more, and what sickens many people — it is in this light that the present legislation will be viewed—is the abject apologies which follow from the Northern Ireland Office and the Foreign Office the moment that Dublin protests. Our counterparts in Europe would have a pretty robust answer to anyone who criticised a soldier for, for example, putting a listening device a few yards in to the Republic to protect himself and his colleagues, his brother soldiers, from the IRA.

I have only a few more minutes and wish to make only one more comment. I should like permission to make that comment and, if I am out of order, I know that you, Mr. Speaker will call me to order. Every time during the past decade that Unionists have urged Her Majesty's Government to take steps to restore a degree of democratic control to the elected representatives of the Ulster people, the answer has always been the same: no devolution of power can be made without the support of both sections of the Ulster Community. We accepted that over a period. It was the solemn pledge given by the Government. However, that solemn pledge was shamelessly abandoned when, behind the backs of the Ulster people, and without consultation with the representatives of the Unionist majority, the Government entered into the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

I am convinced that there can be no political progress in Northern Ireland until the accord is replaced by an agreement worked out by the elected representatives of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. That is where the Government have created a bar to progress, because the creation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement stops that. Until we make progress—I hope it comes sooner rather than later — we shall listen to pious words from successive Secretaries of State about the Government's determination to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland. Sadly, the death toll will continue to climb.

10.10 pm

Mr. Maginnis: Just as on Report I said that I had mixed feelings about the detention provision, so I have mixed feelings about the Bill as a whole. I come, as on Second Reading, without any abatement of the feeling of alienation that I suffered in this House on 15 November 1985. The people who have died in Northern Ireland to

[Mr. Maginnis]

maintain their British citizenship have been betrayed and there has been no sign from hon. Members that that is understood.

The Bill is just so many words, and it will do absolutely nothing to solve the problems that we face in Northern Ireland. It was interesting to hear the Secretary of State tell the House that he was retaining in the Bill the element that deals with internment or detention because an emergency may arise or a Doomsday may come when no Government "could stand idly by". Those were his exact words. The Government have stood idly by for the past 17 years and allowed terrorism to march unhindered through the Province. I know that it is hurtful to the Secretary of State and the Minister of State to hear these facts yet again, and I shall not dwell on them, but 154 of the 181 murders in my constituency have not been resolved. In the words of the Secretary of State and the Minister of State, following incidents of violence, the people of Northern Ireland take hope or fall into the pit of despair.

On 30 March, sadly, a Regular soldier, Iain O'Connor, was killed in Belfast, and the Northern Ireland Office provided the BBC with a statement, as it always does. In that information it stated that this was the first death of a Regular soldier for eight months, so there had been a reduction in violence in Northern Ireland. I doubt whether the Ministers even remember that on 9 July 1986 the last two regular soldiers to be killed were members of the Royal Anglians, Karl Davies and Robert Bertram. We all regret the deaths of members of the Regular Army.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) paid tribute to the RUC. I should like to pay tribute to the Regular Army which serves in Northern Ireland and the Ulster Defence Regiment. If, for Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office, the measure of violence is the number of Regular Army men who die, and whom obviously we must hear about, I have no faith in them and I despise their efforts to solve our problems.

What they did not tell us was that 42 other people died in Northern Ireland in those eight months. Those facts were hidden from the great British public. I wish that the Minister would stop muttering to himself and listen to what I have to tell him. He has become the Robinson Crusoe of the Conservative party. He is the longest serving Minister in the Northern Ireland Office and he has caused more offence to the people of Northern Ireland than any other Minister. It is intolerable that we must listen to a Minister whose rich and fruity tones—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Gentleman want to say something?

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I muttered that I thought the hon. Gentleman was not enhancing his case by indulging in such personal remarks.

Mr. Maginnis: I am sorry if the facts of the tragedy of Northern Ireland offend hon. Members.

The Minister, as a wine drinker, may appreciate this. I was saying that his rich and fruity tones are galling to the people of Northern Ireland when they listen to him on the television trying to justify the unjustifiable—the failure of the Government to deal with the tragedy of our Province.

We have now reached a stage when Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office are disliked—I shall use only the word "disliked"—to an extent which is second only to the extent that we dislike, detest and revile the terrorists who kill our people. They have mocked us through the television screen. They have been the apologists for the Government of the Irish Republic—a country which, whether we like it or not, has given solace and shelter to the terrorists who kill my constituents.

Last Friday my 32nd constituent died at the hands of terrorists since my election to the House on 9 January 1983. How many hon. Members, if they had to come to the House and speak of 32 people who had died at the hands of terrorists in their constituencies, could accept the charm and honeyed words — words of apparent understanding—which have come from the Dispatch Box this evening? For the Northern Ireland Office to tell the great British public that terrorism is on the decrease in Ulster is a shame.

I shall not go back to the pre-Agreement days. Let me go back to 1986. Between 1 January and 8 April, 10 people died in Northern Ireland as a result of terrorism. In 1987 in the same period 22 people died, an increase of 120 per cent. Yet the Government tell us that terrorism is being contained.

Cross-border co-operation has existed as far back as I can remember, right back to the first time that I put on a uniform in 1958. It existed because decent members of the Garda Siochana liaised with decent members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on a buddy-buddy basis. It was not good enough, because it was always hindered by the Government in Dublin, but it worked. It was never satisfactory, but it was done with good will. We have now formalised that agreement. No longer can the Garda Siochana liaise on the buddy-buddy basis with their counterparts in the RUC; rather they must feed upwards through the bureaucratic system what information they have, feed it across and back down again.

Ministers must listen and stop shaking their heads. I talk to the policemen who have to do the work on the border. I am talking not about the constables or the sergeants, or even the inspectors; I am talking about senior police officers. They tell me that co-operation has never been less effective than it is today.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Look at the Minister of State laughing and shaking his head.

Mr. Maginnis: Of course he is still laughing and shaking his head. Despite all the years that he has spent with us, he is incapable of understanding how we feel. He tends to believe the propaganda of those who tell him that it is a sectarian problem; the "Prots" do not like the Catholics and the Catholics do not like the "Prots". That is the greatest load of rubbish. If the Minister knew what went on in my constituency, where I represent my entire community, he would stop shaking his head and listen.

The hon. Member for North Down alluded to the fact that the Secretary of State made the most abject apology to the Government of the Irish Republic. That Government have been set in joint authority over the people of Northern Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman made the most abject apology about a listening device placed a few yards inside the Irish Republic. Not only did he make the most abject apology, but he assured his counterpart that the officer or officers responsible would be disciplined for committing the offence. In reality, that offence was an attempt to try to save the lives of their own men.

On another occasion that co-operative Government detained a Regular Army soldier who happened to cross

a farmyard out of Northern Ireland into Southern Ireland. that farmyard belonged to "Slab" Murphy. Hon. Members may have seen an article about him and the way in which he has exploited the situation over the years for personal gain. He is a smuggler. He has close connections with and could operate only with the permission and acquiesence of the Provisional IRA. It was from his yard that the soldier was abducted and taken off to the local Garda station. I agree he was released, but I did not hear one word of objection from the Northern Ireland Office about the way in which our soldiers are treated when they happen to move across that imaginary line and transgress, by a few yards, the territory of the Irish Republic.

In the past I have come to the House and told how terrorists walk the streets of my town. They are known terrorists. I named one of them in this House. He was later arrested in Scotland where he had gone to perpetrate an outrage against the Great British public. He is now in prison in Great Britain. Those terrorists who still walk the streets of my town are not the first or second, but the third generation of terrorists since the 1970s. Terrorists tend to be men in their twenties. Those terrorists of the 1970s retired two generations back. Most of them retired unscathed to encourage the next generations to follow in their footsteps. Their advice was, "Be fleet of foot. We will condition you on how to deal with the RUC when they interrogate you about a crime. The law is inadequate so do not worry. There will be no or only minimum convictions against you." That is what we face when we discuss the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill. We are discussing something against which this Bill is ineffective.

I see two generations of known gunmen walking the streets of my town. They are free men, freer than their victims or potential victims—those people who uphold and try to enforce the law. That is the reality. It is something with which the Northern Ireland Office, the Bill and, sadly, the Government are impotent to deal.

I know that Conservative Members believe that they will be returned to Government at the next election, be it May, June or October. They will consider inflation and tell us that it is steady or, indeed, going down. They will consider the way in which the Government have dealt with militant trades unionism and the problems in our schools. They will claim "Success, success, success."

Those hon. Members should consider the streets of their towns. I have had invitations to speak in the constituencies of hon. Members and I go round and meet members of the Great British public. At such meetings I say, "So you feel your Government have succeeded. But would you feel content walking down the streets of Wolverhampton, Bournemouth, Preston, Liverpool, Glasgow or London at half-past 10 at night with your handbag on your arm?" The little old dear sitting in the front row looks horrified, because she would not. I tell those meetings that if their Government have not got the courage to deal with law and order at that level, how can they deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland?

What emergency will force or motivate the Secretary of State to take action against terrorism? What is that emergency? How many people have to die before the Secretary of State realises that British citizens in Ulster deserve more than the right hon. Gentleman and his predecessors have brought to them over 17 years?

Does the Secretary of State honestly believe, and can he stand up and tell me that the time that we have given in this House today to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill will make one iota of difference to the people of Belleek, Garrison, Aughnacloy, Newtown Butler or Rosslea? If the Secretary of State can say that, I want to hear it and my people want to hear it. Despite the welcome that I received from the Liberal spokesman on Northern Ireland, there is no point in my coming here in the belief that I can do good for the people I represent unless the House is willing to listen to me and to take this piece of paper and study it. Is the Secretary of State willing to take it?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maginnis: If he is, Mr. Speaker, I apologise. If he is not——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman return to the Benches and not remain in the Gangway, please?

Mr. Maginnis: I apologise, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

National Health Service

10.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 368), dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that it will be convenient for the House to discuss also the following motions:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 371), dated 10th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 401), dated 11th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 367), dated 4th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 385), dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 386), dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 387), dated 9th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th March, be annulled.

Mr. Dobson: These days a lot of attention is being paid in the House to the next general election, although in view of the recent polls the Prime Minister may have missed the 7 May boat and the general election could be as many as 14 months away. But first, I should like to draw attention to the general election of 1979.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Boring.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman says, "Boring." I should like to draw attention to the basis on which the Tory party fought that general election.

On the Thursday before the 1979 general election the *Daily Mail*, which has always been a favourite gutter rag of the Tory party, obliged its Tory friends by running a major headline which read, "Labour's dirty dozen". It said that the Labour party was putting about 12 lies and it would give the Tory answers. Lie No. 9 was said to be:

"There are Tory proposals for higher prescription charges . . . Truth: 'We have no intention of increasing . . . such charges', says Mrs. Thatcher".

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): That is an old lie. In the course of this nonsence, will the hon. Gentleman tell us what the Prime Minister actually said on 18 April 1979? She said at a press conference:

"I doubt very much whether any responsible Government could say that over a period of five years, regardless of what happened to the value of money, they would not put up prescription charges."

Mr. Dobson: The *Daily Mail* article was published a week before the general election.

Mr. Nicholls: So was this.

Mr. Dobson: The Tories were in opposition and the Prime Minister was quoted. This is in quotation marks in the *Daily Mail*. She never sought for one moment to deny what was stated in quotation marks on the front page of the *Daily Mail* that Thursday.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Dobson: I certainly will not.

What is more, the right hon. Lady then rewarded the editor of the *Daily Mail* with a knighthood. Either he was lying and she gave him a knighthood, or he was telling the truth and she gave him a knighthood. She probably has ceased to distinguish between the two.

When that promise was made on the front of the *Daily Mail*, the prescription charge was just 20p. The Tories won the general election and, before the year was out, that charge which was not going to be increased had been increased twice to a total of 70p — a 350 per cent. increase in a year.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No, I shall not give way. There is not enough time.

There have been seven more increases since those initial two increases, taking us to the present proposition of a total of 240p—an increase of 1,200 per cent. That rate of increase even exceeds the rate of increase in the value of British Telecom multiple share purchases by Tory Members.

The Labour party is opposed in principle and in practice to these charges. No other party is so opposed. With the benefit of the document which reads

"Conservative Research Department Brief on the English and Scottish National Health Service charges",

which was prepared for this debate, under the "general points to make" given in the advice to Tory Members we find the following:

"The Conservative party has always maintained that those who can afford to should make a fair contribution to the costs of the NHS."

The fairest tax is income tax. People who can afford to pay income tax can contribute to the costs of the National Health Service in that way.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Dobson: No, I certainly will not.

The SDP, which could be described as the spiritual home of prescription charges, remains in favour of them. I understand that the Doctor has told the other David that the Liberal party is in favour of prescription charges. Therefore, the Labour party remains the only party opposed to these charges.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us for the record why in the original Bill the Labour party provided that there should

be a facility for charging and why the Labour Government in the 1960s, having abolished prescription charges, reintroduced them?

Mr. Dobson: In my view, they brought them back under pressure from people in the City who had no intention —*[Interruption.]* I may look as though I am getting on a bit, but no one can accuse me of being in the House as long ago as 1966. In my view, that decision was wrong and the increase should never have been introduced in the first place. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who was present then, was one of those who voted against the introduction, and all credit to him.

We believe that the implementation of these charges proves to be a deterrent to people seeking treatment.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Dobson: No, I shall not. I shall develop my own arguments. *[Interruption.]* I am normally very willing to give way, but as the Government, who organise the business of the House, have organised it in such a way that a debate of an hour and a half has already been reduced to an hour by the previous debate running over, I do not think that it is reasonable to be expected to give way.

Other people share our concern about the impact of prescription charges on poorer people. The British Medical Association says that the charges have reached a level that deters people from seeking medical treatment.

It says:

"Any extension of the present exemptions"—

which has been suggested as a way round the problem by some people—

is likely to introduce further anomalies and raise disproportionately the burden on those paying the charges"

It describes the present list of exemptions for the chronically sick as incomplete, illogical and open to attack —and the members of the British Medical Association are masters of understatement.

In Stockport recently, I visited the Shaw Heath health centre. A general practitioner there told me that he now asks his poorer patients if they are exempt from charges. If they say, "Yes, we are exempt from charges", he prescribes all the drugs that they need. If they say that they are not exempt, he either omits the second or third most important item—if it is a multiple-item prescription—or puts all the items on the prescriptions and tells the patients which are the most important items so that if they cannot afford all of them they will know which they can best do without. The other doctors present—and, to the best of my knowledge, not a single one, including that doctor, is either a member or a supporter of the Labour party—said that they did the same.

Figures from the prescription checking bureau, which are available to Ministers, confirm that that is so, with as many as 100,000 items a year on multiple-item prescription forms not being bought.

A further development is that doctors whose social consciences exceed that of the present Government—and, God knows, that must include most of the medical profession—are increasingly prescribing more than a 30-day supply of drugs for people on repeat prescriptions to keep down the costs. In the spring of 1986, the proportion of 30 days-plus supplies had reached no less a level than 16·5 per cent. of prescriptions. That response by doctors is at the same time both humane and disturbing: most people agree that supplies prescribed should be kept to a minimum, because access to large numbers of drugs and long supplies are potentially dangerous both to the patients and to other people living with or helping them. All those are the consequences of the grasping policies of the present Governent.

No doubt the Minister will switch on his Norm-speak auto-pilot and repeat all the stuff about three quarters of the public not paying for their prescriptions — *[Interruption.]* Oh, it is true. He will go on to suggest that the remaining quarter who pay for the 80 million prescriptions that are paid for are flush with money—perhaps not the sort of people who could afford to make multiple applications for privatised shares in public assets, but people for whom paying, say £7·20 for a three-item prescription will not be a strain. But of course not everyone is a QC specialising in company law.

Let me advise Ministers — and any hon. Member proposing to support them in the Lobby tonight — to look at the official leaflet entitled "NHS Prescriptions: How to Get them Free". Tory Members will no doubt be able to call on the services of their accountants or lawyers if they find it difficult to understand—and I suggest that they may find it difficult to understand. The section on low incomes reads as follows:

"What counts as a low income depends on how many people there are in your family and how much money you've got left after you've paid essential outgoings and taken account of certain allowances. You can work this out for yourself (all these amounts are each week)".

It then lists

"rent or mortgage
rates
life insurance premiums
HP payments for essential household goods
fares to and from work of you and your partner
trade union subs"—

they have not noticed that yet—

"cost of care of a child or other dependant while you are at work
£4 of your earnings
£4 of your partner's earnings
if you are a lone parent, half your earnings between £4 and £20".

When we have done all that it says:

"Take this total away from the money you have coming in each week and see how much you have left. Now see whether it's worth claiming free prescriptions. It's worth claiming if, for example, you're single, not a householder, and don't have much more than about . . . £33 left each week, or if you're a couple and don't have much more than about £53 left each week . . . or if you're a couple with two children, one aged under five . . . and don't have much more than about £75 left each week."

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I shall finish this point, and then I will decide whether to give way.

Ministers should consider the finances of those who have just a little more than that left at the end of each week and who therefore do not qualify for free prescriptions. Using the family expenditure survey that is provided by the Government, a couple—after the deductions I have mentioned—with £56 or £58 left to them at the end of each week will spend more than £45 a week of that on fuel, light, food, clothing and footwear alone, leaving them with £11 or £13 a week. Out of that, they have to pay for everything else that I have not already listed: for soap, washing-up liquid, matches, shoe polish, phone calls,

[Mr. Dobson]

stamps. That leaves them with less than a fiver. They will be unable to save up for a holiday, yet they will have to pay for prescriptions. At the end of the week they will not have enough money left to pay for a three-item prescription.

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I shall not burden the House by giving other examples. Many people who are not well off are having to pay for prescriptions and are deterred from seeking medical treatment because they have to pay. That is borne out by the prescription checking bureau figures, by the British Medical Association representations and by the representations that are made by doctors to Members of Parliament. If I had to choose between all those bits of evidence and something from a Minister in this Government, I know where I believe the truth lies.

I do not intend to refer tonight to dental charges other than to welcome the news that they are not to be increased.

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is a parliamentary private secretary and that it is traditional for parliamentary private secretaries to keep their traps shut.

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: Regulations are also before us tonight that will increase the charges for overseas visitors who fall sick when they are here.

Mr. Favell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) mentioned my constituency and made certain allegations about a health centre in the constituency. In those circumstances, is it not usual to allow an intervention?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The hon. Gentleman knows that it is entirely up to the hon. Member who is addressing the House whether he gives way.

Mr. Nicholls: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It can hardly be further to a point of order that was not a point of order.

Mr. Nicholls: It is a new point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for a Front Bench Opposition spokesman in the middle of a speech to yell over the Dispatch Box, "Keep your trap shut?" So far as that is a call to order, should it not be a matter for the Chair?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that such matters are best left to the Chair. As I understand it, it was part of the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Dobson: I always try to raise the tone wherever I go.

Certain people have always put it around that it is possible to come to Britain deliberately to obtain free medical care. It was never free on the NHS. The Government introduced charges for people who fell sick while they were here. There were many people, including some Conservative Members, in 1981 and 1982, when the matter was debated, who felt that it would be damaging to our international reputation to introduce charges for such people.

Nevertheless, the charges were introduced with effect from October 1982 on the assumption that they would bring in the princely sum of £6 million a year. The Government sold our reputation for a mess of pottage. The charges have scarcely raised £6 million in gross takings since their introduction. The Government have consistently refused to give any estimate of the cost of collecting the charges. Nor have they made any estimate of the cost of establishing the charging system, which has had to be set up in each of the 214 health authorities and boards in England, Wales and Scotland.

The Opposition regard the charges as shabby. They are an affront to the principles on which the NHS was established.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): The hon. Gentleman made it absolutely clear that, in his view at least, prescription charges ought to be abolished. Will he make it plain whether the next Labour Government, if such should ever be returned, would enable people to come here for free treatment under the NHS?

Mr. Dobson: The Minister——

Mr. Nicholls: Answer.

Mr. Dobson: I am happy to answer. The Minister said that people would be able to come here for free treatment. People were never entitled to come here with the intention of receiving free treatment. The Minister should not try to give that myth another run.

Mr. Newton: Does that mean that, in addition to every other control on immigration, visitors must be asked whether there is any possibility of their needing medical treatment while they are in Britain?

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman ought to know that many visitors are already asked that question on arrival. We think that it is wrong that that question, and many others like it, should be asked. It was never lawful for someone to come here seeking free treatment under the NHS, and we do not propose to change that.

Prescription charges are damaging to our health care system. They are damaging to people who are not very well off and who do not benefit from existing exemptions. It is the Labour party's policy, on being returned to office, to reduce them substantially immediately and to phase them out in the lifetime of one Parliament.

10.54 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I had thought that it would be for the convenience of the House if I were to wind up the debate because I imagined that at least one or two other hon. Members would wish to take part in the debate, but as it seems to be the wish of the House, and certainly of the Opposition, that I should speak now, I shall do so. However, I shall not make many of the remarks that I had intended to make in outlining what these various regulations will do. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) paid scant regard to a large part of the subject matter of tonight's debate and strayed in various ways. Although he gave us a good deal of entertainment, he hardly raised the level of debate on these serious issues.

In the light of the history of this matter, in terms both of the record of the last Labour Government and some of the suggestions about the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during the election campaign in 1979,

I found some of the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks extraordinary, and they were convincingly and effectively disposed of by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls).

The great point on which the hon. Member appeared to be clear early in his speech, and about which I understood him to make a ringing declaration, was that prescription charges would disappear in a puff of wind if and when he and his hon. Friends got into office. Although it sounded like that at the beginning, it did not sound like that at the end. By the end, one got the clear impression that these were promises to be made before an election, only to be run away from after it.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The hon. Gentleman can talk!

Mr. Newton: Not only can I talk, but I intend to talk. What is more, I intend to ask one or two questions of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. It is all very well for him to come here and say that he knew that a Labour Government abolished these charges in 1965, only to reintroduce them in 1968, and when challenged say that had he been here he might have voted against that being done because he thought it was wrong.

Mr. Dobson: That is a loose paraphrase.

Mr. Newton: It is not all that loose.

At any rate, we now know that the hon. Gentleman thinks that the Labour Government's of 1964 to 1970 were wrong on at least that matter. The rest of us could probably think of many other matters on which they were wrong. What I want to know from the hon. Gentleman is what gives him any conceivable grounds for believing, in the light of the record of that Government, and of the intervening Labour Government, that any future Labour Government would get anything any more right.

Mr. Dobson: The problem was caused by the City.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman thinks that City gents were responsible for the failure.

Mr. Dobson: There are no gents in the City.

Mr. Newton: It was chaps in the City, or, for all I know, gnomes in the City. I wonder.

The hon. Gentleman said that he was too young to have been here in 1968, and I shall not speculate about that. However, I know that he has been in politics for long enough to know that it was not the people in the City who caused the problems for the Labour Governments of 1964 to 1970. The people in the City ran out of their capacity to finance a profligate Labour Government, who had to turn to the international bankers. We had the International Monetary Fund here.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): This Government have broken their promises.

Mr. Newton: I can deal with the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) as well if need be.

The memory of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras does not embrace the fact that the following Labour Government were also involved with the IMF. That Labour Government got it all wrong as well, and on that occasion the casualty — more significantly than anything that we are talking about tonight — was the whole National Health Service and above all the hospital building programme. With such a track record in the 1960s, and another in the 1970s, on what does the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras base the pathetic belief that any future Labour Government would do any better?

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I can offer a possible solution to the dilemma that my hon. Friend has just posed. He will recollect that one of the principles to which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred — the basic principle of the Health Service, to which he wanted to return — was that the Health Service would eventually wither away. Could a future Labour Government be proposing a return to the basic principles of the Health Service by claiming that they will deal with prescription charges by allowing the Health Service to wither, as they did when last in government and as they had done previously?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is very likely right. I do not say that a future Labour Government would intend the Health Service to wither, but the consequence of their policies in the past has been to wither the service and it is only by dint of considerable effort and, above all, additional investment by this Government that the hospital building programme is now recovering from the effects of the previous Labour Government. Against that background, I find it incredibly stupid — apart from anything else—that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras should come here tonight and say that he is willing to give up about £150 million of revenue for the Health Service, which I believe is raised reasonably, which is certainly making a very useful contribution to other aspects of the Health Service and which no Government in their right mind would throw away in the manner suggested by the hon. Gentleman, at one blow, or gradually as he suggested at the end of his speech.

I shall not speak for much longer, as I believe that other hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.

If I understood the other arm of the policy adumbrated by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, it was that he would abolish prescription charges at some stage and fund that substantial sum of money by increasing income tax. Has he considered what that would mean for pensioners, who are currently exempt from prescription charges, but who are certainly not exempt from income tax? Has he tried that line on the pensioners? Has he——

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): Does my hon. Friend know how much that would cost the taxpayer? If not, would he let me know later?

Mr. Newton: It would cost about £150 million. That is the income from prescription charges. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has said that he will add that to income tax.

Having commented on the main points raised by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, I want to make another point, on which I pressed the hon. Gentleman in interventions during his speech. However clear the House may feel that the hon. Gentleman's position is on prescription charges—and I, at least, thought that he shifted his position from the beginning to the end of his speech—we need to have a clear understanding of what a Labour Government's attitude would be to those who come to this country as visitors and are treated under the Health Service. We need to know whether that would be free.

[Mr. Newton]

The Government's position on that matter is absolutely clear, and has been throughout. We think that it is reasonable that people coming as visitors to this country should be expected to cover the costs of the medical treatment that they receive here, in the same way as citizens of this country who have to visit the United States, for example, are expected to insure within the terms of the health service operating in that country, and have appropriate cover for most other countries in the world.

I have no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the British public believe that that is common sense. They would regard it as something of scandal if nothing had been done about people coming to this country, often—although this is difficult to check specifically—with the intention of receiving free treatment on the Health Service. That prospect is obviously re-opened by the implied policy stated by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras tonight.

Mr. Haynes *rose*——

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Ashfield is great at diversionary tactics. Let me just——

Mr. Haynes: Do not dodge the issue.

Mr. Newton: I would not want to dodge the hon. Gentleman, nor would I want to tempt him into making more of his flattering remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, which have kept her in the newspapers heavily for the best part of six weeks.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister is jealous.

Mr. Newton: I am not looking to the hon. Gentleman to describe me as attractive or pretty. I shall leave him to continue his dialogue with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

I shall return to the serious issue from which the hon. Member for Ashfield was trying, understandably, to divert the House. The debate should not be allowed to end this evening without a much clearer-cut statement from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras on his party's policy on charging those from overseas who come to Britain to receive treatment on the National Health Service, or to need treatment on it while they are here for another reason. Whether the cost is £6 million or any other sum, there is a point of principle, and certainly of common sense, that needs to be established. We are entitled to a clearer answer than anything that we have heard so far from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

With the leave of the House, I shall happily comment upon any of the other contributions that are made in the debate. For the moment, I shall rest my case.

11.7 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I shall vote against the Government measures that are before us. I have done so on previous occasions when charges have been increased by more than the rate of inflation since the Government have come to power.

Although there are difficulties, I do not take the unrealistic line that the Labour party propounds. There is no doubt that the rate of increase in the charges since 1979 has been substantially above the rate of inflation. There was an increase of 125 per cent. within the first year alone of the Government coming to office. If the basic prescription charge had been raised in line with inflation since 1979, the charge would now be about 37p. If the charge had been raised in line with inflation from the time that the moderating charge was introduced in the early 1950s, it would be about £1. Unfortunately, the Government have not been consistent. Indeed, this year's increases were such that the *Daily Telegraph* on the day after the Minister's announcement, described them as "higher than expected". That appeared on the front page in the leading article.

The second unfairness about the increase in the charges in that there is a 9 per cent. increase in the basis prescription charge while the amenity beds charge is increased by only 8·3 per cent. over two years, and private out-patients' charges have been increased by only 6·1 per cent. this year. There should be a consistency in the increase in the changes

There is an unfairness in treatment between the NHS generally and the private sector. There is also the issue of uncollected charges. To impose charges that amount to the rate of inflation and then to fail to collect them leads to a double disadvantage. I hope that we shall hear sooner rather than later about what the Minister intends to do about uncollected charges. I believe that he owes me a letter on that issue. I ask him also to justify the lower than 9 per cent. charge that has been imposed on the private sector.

Mr. Dobson: The Minister does not owe the hon. Member as much as the private patients owe the NHS.

Mr. Hughes: I have made the point: there is a lot of uncollected money, not least in Camberwell health authority area, part of which I represent.

The view of the Liberal party has never been that prescription charges should be abolished. Indeed, right from the beginning the Labour Government provided for charges in the legislation by which the Health Service was set up. The moderating fee was introduced early in the life of the National Health Service. I have always believed that a fee is proper because people need to be reminded that they are getting things which cost the public sector money. After all, 75 per cent of people are exempt. In general terms that covers the most vulnerable groups.

The Minister should answer one further valid point that has been made. The British Medical Association and other professional bodies make the point consistently that the level of charges now is a deterrent to some people having prescriptions. That is clear evidence that the substantial increase since 1979 is unjustified. I accept that there should be charges but when charges start to deter, that is tilting the charging balance too far in the wrong direction.

It is also ludicrous that some prescriptions, if obtained through the NHS, will cost £2·40 if these regulations are accepted, when their real cost is substantially less. I appreciate that nothing can be done about this before we vote tonight on the regulations, but the Minister should look into the matter. Some commonly used and easily obtainable drugs are available for, say, 50p. In such cases people should not have to pay the substantial amount of £2·40. Of course, there is always an averaging job to do, but, as I understand it, 32 per cent. of prescriptions issued cost in real terms less than the £2·40 charge.

There is no reason why people coming to Britain should not be required to pay. I have a clear view on that. As the

Minister rightly said, when we travel abroad we have to insure ourselves and make proper contingency plans. People should not come to Britain with the presumption or expectation that they will be treated free.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman is making a serious contribution to the debate. As I understand it, he says that he agrees with the principle of charges being made. In a sense he could not deny that, because that point was made by Lord Grimond when the Labour party introduced prescription charges. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to introduce the criterion of charges at a level which will not deter people from getting prescriptions, what evidence can he produce to the House that the present level of charge is deterring people who would otherwise take up prescriptions?

Mr. Hughes: There is a factual answer to the hon. Gentleman's perfectly proper question. The number of prescriptions issued has gone down. There are several reasons. General practitioners and dispensers can testify to one reason, about which there has been much survey evidence—that the level of charge has a deterrent effect.

The argument about prescription charges is always how one balances the books for the Health Service. The Health Service benefits from charges.

The Minister may have seen in *New Society* last September an article headed:

"Should drugs be free? The Labour party last week promised to abolish prescription charges. Jeremy Laurance asks if this is a sensible priority."

The article ended:

"Removing the charges risks stimulating demand, and putting an extra financial burden on an already stretched NHS."

My colleagues and I cannot say that we will abolish prescription charges, much though we would like to do so in an ideal world. Something else in the Health Service would suffer if that were done. There will be prescription charges, but at no stage will they be increased by us by more than the rate of inflation, as far as one can possibly help or predict that. However, I am unwilling to compromise other areas of health care when the majority of the vulnerable are exempt. Certainly, a few people still suffer when they should not, and exemptions should be extended. However, in general terms, the criticism is not that there are prescription charges but that under this Government those charges have increased much more than they need have done, and have done so with unfair consequences.

11.15 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): There is something deeply disagreeable these days about the nature of the Labour party. Because Labour Members have lost the political argument, they seem to concentrate on personal attack. There is grave disgrace as far as their party is concerned at the moment. Where they are still involved in the political argument, they seek not to illuminate but to misrepresent.

Who would have thought from the behaviour of those few Labour Members who are here this evening that on one occasion during this debate—a deeply important debate, so we are led to believe by the Labour party—there were only three Labour Members present? That, too is a disgrace. Who would have thought that during the lifetime of this caring Government there has been an increase of one quarter in expenditure on the Health Service? For every £4 that was spent when this caring Government came to power, £5 is now spent on the needs of the unhealthy and of the people who we in this country, and in this Government, want to take care of? Who would have thought from the weasel words of Opposition Members that three quarters of prescription charges do not need to be paid and that three quarters of prescriptions are paid for by the taxpayer, and quite rightly so, as well? Who would have thought that the most disadvantaged in society do not have to pay prescription charges? Who would have thought that all men over 65, women over 60, children under 16 and mothers do not have to pay prescription charges? The chronically sick do not have to pay prescription charges. Season tickets are available for those who want them to pay for their prescription charges.

Opposition Members do not care. They do not want to inform; they want to misinform. When there is rationalisation in the Health Service, when old, inefficient and inadequate resources are put on one side and the money saved from those resources is put into new hospitals, new buildings and new operating theatres, we do not hear anything from Opposition Members. All they seek to do is to misrepresent. All they seek to do, for their own grubby political ends, is to lower people's faith and to undermine their trust in the National Health Service for their dirty, grubby, deep, unpleasant, sanctimonious ends.

Out of the £1·8 billion that prescriptions cost this country, a mere £145 million is raised through prescription charges. That money is spent in the Health Service. That money is spent on providing free syringes for people who did not have them before, for diabetics. This is another side of the caring Government. What is the Labour party going to do? It will not get into power, but what would it do if it did get into power? Would it provide those free syringes? If it did, where would it get the money from? About £145 million is spent on care in the Health Service as a result of prescription charges being paid only by those who can afford to pay them.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman is on page three now.

Mr. Marlow: Mr. Deputy Speaker, for 27 minutes of this debate, that giggling idiot on the Labour Front Bench——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not helping the debate. He should withdraw that remark.

Mr. Marlow: I withdraw that remark, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) spent 40 per cent. of the debate addressing the House with weasel words and reading from his text word by word, yet he is accusing me of reading when I have no notes before me.

Labour Members have no policies or facts. All they seek to do is to disrupt, to undermine and to lower people's faith in the Health Service that the Government are rightly giving to the country.

11.20 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has reaffirmed from the Front Bench that the next Labour Government will proceed to reduce, and eventually to abolish, prescription charges. *[Interruption.]* I cannot understand why there should be such maniacal screeches from the Conservative Benches.

[Mr. Michael Foot]

My time goes back further than that of my hon Friend and I am not sure what stage of development he had reached in 1966——

Mr. Dobson: Innocence.

Mr. Foot: Yes, innocence and I am glad to see that my hon. Friend retains a large proportion of that innocence even now. I remember vividly how the Conservative party did everything possible to oppose the introduction of a free National Health Service. Tory Members voted against it on Second Reading and again on Third Reading, which was a further confirmation of their opposition to the principle of the service. One of the elements that they particulary hated was the idea that the service should be free to the patient. Because of the Socialist idea to provide the service on the basis of need, not money, and other practical reasons, the service was introduced in the first place. That was undoubtedly why Conservatives at that time were so bitterly opposed to it.

I know that we cannot necessarily restore the NHS all in one go, although it would not be impossible. I understand that the cost would be £360 million, and in the Budget the Government could easily have raised £360 million from people who have been drawing £360 million in tax reliefs ever since 1979. They could easily contribute that sum, partly to restore the principle of a free Health Service, and partly to restore some parts of the Health Service——

Mr. Nicholls: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foot: No, I shall not give way. Because of the way in which the Government have mismanaged the arrangement for this debate there is hardly a minute left, so I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. Moreover, I am not at all sure that the hon. Gentleman is in a fit condition to be given way to.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that your hearing is at least as good as mine. I do not know what the right hon. Gentleman had in mind by making a slur like that. On reflection he may feel that he should not only withdraw it but give me a chance to intervene.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What the right hon. Gentleman was saying was not clear to me.

Mr. Foot: I am glad that the Labour party is now recommitted to the restoration of a free NHS. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I hope——

Mr. Nicholls: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foot: I hope that the——

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understood that the right hon. Gentleman was getting to his feet to withdraw the imputation that I was incapable of making an intervention. Will he withdraw it, or not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman did not make any specific allegation about the hon. Gentleman. [HON. MEMBERS: "He did."] The right hon. Gentleman did not feel that the hon. Gentleman was making the right interjection.

Mr. Foot: I did not hear you make any request to me to withdraw my comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I certainly do not think that I have said anything that requires to be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Knowing the right hon. Gentleman, I am sure that if he had made any allegations that the hon. Gentleman was in some sort of condition, he would withdraw it.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Foot: If I had thought for a moment that the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is addressing me.

Mr. Foot *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I had called Mr. Foot. He was going to make some explanation to me.

Mr. Foot: I do not think that I made any reflection on the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) that required any withdrawal. If he thinks that any withdrawal is necessary, he must have an even thinner skin that I thought. When I depart from any parliamentary procedure and I am asked to withdraw by any occupant of the Chair I obey, but no such requirement has been made.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North) *rose*——

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Foot: I am glad that my hon. Friends have given a commitment to the restoration of a free National Health Service——

Mr. Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) was not in a fit state to make his speech or intervention. He has not withdrawn that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I understood it, the right hon. Gentleman may have meant that the hon. Gentleman was over-excited — *[Interruption.]* Order. I am anxious to help the House. I did not sense a personal attack.

Mr. Foot: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that you are right. I was following your instructions——

Mr. Stern: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I naturally accept your hearing of what was said by the right hon. Gentleman. However, I think that we are entitled to some consideration. I was in the direct path of the remarks of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and it seemed to many Conservative Members that there was a clear implication in what he said. One would hate to think that the right hon. Gentleman was using his seniority in the House to get away with something that many hon. Members would not be allowed to get away with.

Mr. Foot: Anyone who listened to what I said could see how justified it was.

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the second time that the right hon. Gentleman has suggested that I am not in a fit state to speak in the House. Your must have heard that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I did not hear the right hon. Gentleman say that any hon. Member was not in a fit state.

Mr. Foot: The hon. Gentleman should study *Hansard* tomorrow and look at the facts of the matter.

I am sorry that more time was not provided by the Government for the debate. I am sorry also that some Conservative Members thought it advisable to take up time with bogus points of order to stop the debate proceeding.

It is right that we should make clear to the country that one of our objectives is to re-establish a free National Health Service. We know that it will cost something. I should like to see it extended to the restoration of a proper dental service, the restoration of a proper optical service and the restoration of the ideals that prevailed when the service was introduced, which was why the Conservatives tried to prevent its being brought into being. That is the kind of service that we want to see re-established. The sooner we start that task, the sooner we shall be able to carry it through to completion.

At the beginning of his speech the Minister for Health pretended that the Prime Minister had not sought to mislead the public on whether the Government intended to introduce prescription charges. The Prime Minister said that she had no intention of introducing prescription charges, yet we are discussing those increases. No hon. Member could make that excuse and think that he would get away with it.

11.29 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I want to ask the Minister one factual question which concerns dental charges. My evidence, frankly, is only anecdotal, but it seems to many of us that decisions are made not necessarily on the clinical judgments of dentists, but on their assumptions, right or otherwise, about a patient's ability to pay. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, there is a deterrent here. I simply ask, in the time available, whether the Department recognises that there is a problem.

Mr. Newton: I am in some difficulty because there are no proposed changes in dental charges in the regulations.

Let me tell the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that the ideals of the National Health Service, on his analysis, lasted for only about three years because the then Labour Government introduced charges in 1951——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)).*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 67, Noes 142.

Division No. 142] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Duba, Alfred
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Kennedy, Charles
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Chris Smith.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bigga-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Jackson, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*

Shelton, William (Streatham)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim (Dorset W)
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis (Nuneaton)
Stewart, Andrew (Sherwood)
Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick (N'ich N)
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. (Bexhill)
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen (Hertford)
Wells, Sir John (Maidstone)
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Defence

11.40 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): I beg to move,

That the draft International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designations and Privileges) (Amendment) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 12th March, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following motion:

That the draft Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) (Amendment) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 12th March, be approved.

Mr. Stanley: The two draft orders are complimentary.

Headquarters United Kingdom Air was first established as a NATO major subordinate command in 1975 and since then has been manned by personnel from the Headquarters Royal Air Force Strike Command. It has now been decided to bring this headquarters into line with other NATO major subordinate commands by establishing a small international staff to integrate the command more closely with NATO which has agreed to provide funding for this measure. We are also taking the opportunity to designate the Commander Submarines, Eastern Atlantic as an international headquarters following the granting of international status by the NATO Defence Planning Council in 1982.

The International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designation and Privileges) Order 1965 designated the headquarters of the three major NATO commanders and three subordinate NATO commanders and also the NATO Channel Committee at Northwood and conferred on them such capacities, immunities and privileges as are needed to achieve their efficient organisation and operation. The effect of the first draft order is to add Headquarters United Kingdom Air and the Commander Submarines, Eastern Atlantic to the list of subordinate headquarters covered by the 1965 order.

The second draft order similarly amends the Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) Order 1965. This order was made under section 8 of the Visiting Forces Act 1952, which provides for the application to visiting forces of law relating to home forces.

11.43 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): We welcome the fact that CINCUKAIR and COMSUBEASTLANT are to become international headquarters. Our air and submarine forces play a vital role in NATO's collective defence. Therefore, it is sensible that representatives from the armed forces of our allies should be constantly available and we welcome the installation of a small international staff at these places.

Of particular importance to NATO is CINCUKAIR because one of Britain's most important roles in war would be as a staging post for the reinforcement of Europe. Air defences are absolutely critical if allied defence plans are to have any credibility, yet according to senior RAF officers our air defences are in peril. We rely on 30-year-old Lightnings which leak and 30-year-old Shackletons with no adequate radar and not enough pilots. By making CINCUKAIR an international command headquarters we will give our allies every

opportunity to voice their concern about the lamentable state of our conventional air defences, and then perhaps the Government will do something about it.

I have one question to ask about CONSUBEASTLANT. Will the command remain at Northwood, which is already an international headquarters? If it is to stay there, why is there a need for the change?

I should like to move to the amendment order for the Visiting Forces Act 1952 so that it may apply to the two new international headquarters. Since that Act came into effect in 1952, we have had a number of reservations about it. Indeed, on Second Reading, Mr. Eric Fletcher, the former Labour Member for Islington, East, said:

"This Bill . . . removes from the jurisdiction of the courts of this country a very large number of people . . . There has not been anything like that in this country since the Middle Ages . . . when there was a certain Papal jurisdiction which could defeat the claims of the English common law courts." —[*Official Report*, 17 October 1952; Vol. 505, c. 586.]

It looks as though the Visiting Forces Act is taking over the role of the medieval papacy. Therefore, I have a number of questions to put to the Minister.

Can the Minister assure us that, despite the internationalisation of these establishments, they will at all times be guarded by British service personnel? Can the Minister assure us that any foreign service personnel working at these two establishments who break British law will be brought to justice and that they will be kept in the United Kingdom pending investigations of any allegations against them and not flown quickly home to avoid investigations, perhaps resulting in injustice to British citizens? Will civilians in the United Kingdom have recourse to the law on compensation if they are the victims of motor or other accidents involving foreign service men from these two establishments?

These two orders, although small and technical, are important. We welcome the fact that these headquarters will be part of an internationally recognised headquarters and that international staff will be there. The Labour party regards Britains contribution to NATO as the most important part that we play in having an effective defence for our country.

The Visiting Forces Act will be a continuous source of embarrassment to successive Governments until something is done to satisfy public worry about the effects of the apparent exemption of visiting forces from the ordinary course of the law. That is a problem. We realise that the Visiting Forces Act had the best of intentions, but to give every member of visiting forces the equivalent status of a foreign diplomat or ambassador seems somewhat overgenerous in the circumstances. There is a need for this matter to be properly considered again by the House.

11.46 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): We welcome the integration of NATO commands which is evident in the two orders. When I hear the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) waxing eloquent about Labour's commitment to NATO, my mind goes quickly back to that recent Washington visit and the attempt to explain how NATO could continue with no American nuclear forces as part of our strategic deterrent. But, thankfully, that issue goes wider than these two orders.

Mr. McNamara: What has happened to the great Liberal tradition of democracy when majorities at party conferences are overturned on the whims of leadership on exactly that same principle?

Mr. Beith: I am glad to say that the majority at every Liberal conference I have ever attended, which has been all of them in recent years, have supported the maintenance of NATO's strategic nuclear deterrent on British soil. As long as the deterrent is necessary, they will continue to do so.

I share with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North concern about aspects of the Visiting Forces Act. They have been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) as well. I have one point to put to the Minister which should be fresh in his mind. He will have been looking at the Act because these orders extend its application. Why do not the relevant Government Departments—in part the Home Office and not just the Ministry of Defence — collect and retain information about how the Act operates in practice? My hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil pointed out that it was necessary to obtain from readily available information in the United States the details that

"420 members of the United States air force had infringed British law in relation to drug abuse and that 388 of them had been removed from the jurisdiction of the British courts". —[*Official Report*, 20 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 402.]

We all know that there has been a serious problem in the American forces and the American authorities are doing their best to deal with it. It is not intended as a criticism to raise the matter in that way. The concern is that the information is simply not being collected. This gives the impression that British Government Departments do not know how serious the problem is, do not know how much it is impinging on British life in the areas concerned, do not therefore know whether the problem is properly controlled, and do not, of course, know the extent of punishment of those service men.

I should like the Minister to say whether, in the light of these extensions, he is doing something about the obvious gap in the information that Government Departments ought to hold.

11.50 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I wish to say something on the subject referred to by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

Last Friday I attended a political meeting in Dumbarton. There was much concern, as the hon. Gentleman has suggested, about the relationship between service men and a drug problem. I shall not exaggerate; I do not believe that it is widespread, but it is there, and we require a statement on the policy of the Ministry of Defence.

Part of the debate relates to the efficient organisation of COMSUBEASTLANT. On 27 January, I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) saying that he in turn had received a letter from his constituent Mr. George Turner, of 23, St. Philip's street, Blackburn, Lancashire. My hon. Friend wrote:

"I should be most grateful if you could let me have any up to date information about this so I may decide how to pursue the matter for him."

The letter that he received from his constituent read:

"As a retired ex Royal Air Force Technician, (30 years service), I am curious as to whether any disciplinary action was taken against the submarine Commander regarding the

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

'lost' ship's log—a most serious offence, and definitely a court martial offence . . . I would be grateful for any information."

On 10 March, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces wrote a letter with the reference number D/US of S(AF)RNF 2301. It stated:

"As Mr. Turner may be aware, a Board of Inquiry was held into the apparent disappearance of HMS Conqueror's navigational log for April to September 1982, once this had been discovered in October 1984. The then Secretary of State for Defence"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman referring to the second order or the first? He must relate his speech to the orders that we are discussing. It seems to me that he is now dealing with an internal disciplinary matter of the Royal Navy.

Mr. Dalyell: I was referring to the efficient organisation of COMSUBEASTLANT, which is quite clearly in the explanatory note. The Minister properly said that it was about the efficient organisation of COMSUBEASTLANT, and I do not know what the Clerk was suggesting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make those accusations. I merely want to keep him to the orders. One is addressed to the desirability of extending the privileges to the two headquarters, and the other to the desirability of the change in legal status of the headquarters.

Mr. Dalyell: In his opening remarks, the Minister clearly said in our hearing that the debate was about the efficient organisation of COMSUBEASTLANT. Those were his words.

I shall be brief. Let me add that the Ministry of Defence knows about the reference to the letter.

I now give a recent quotation from the principal warfare officer on board a Navy frigate. He says:

"I was in the Falklands and when we got back I was responsible for all the records and logs on our ship. We thought something odd was going on because instead of being told to send our log books off to Hayes as normal, we were told to collect all our log books together and send them to the Ministry of Defence. It had never happened before, and I know for a fact that this order was given to all the ships and submarines as well. I know exactly where the Conqueror's logs are, they're at the Ministry of Defence. Everyone in the Navy knows that. The so-called missing log book is a load of rubbish."

I think it is fair to ask, after all this time, the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn was asked: what became of those log books? Is not this an opportunity for the Ministry of Defence to come clean, and say that no log book ever went missing from that ship? I take it on my own responsibility that I was told by members—in the plural—of the crew of the Conqueror that, if I thought that any of them had pinched the control room log book of the only nuclear submarine that has ever been used in earnest to put as some kind of ornament on their sideboard, I must be out of my mind. No one did that. There was a very efficient debriefing. No log book ever went missing. It was used by the former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), as a smokescreen on the morning that he was to appear before the Select Committee.

It is all a load of hooey. I believe that, rather than in the submarine control room headquarters, the log book of the Conqueror is sitting in the Ministry of Defence, where it ought to be, and that it is known to Ministry of Defence Ministers that it is among the public records. It is all a load of rubbish, and it is legitimate to raise the matter in this debate.

11.55 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): When the Minister of State for the Armed Forces introduced the order, he drew attention to the Visiting Forces Act 1952. It is reasonable that hon. Members should ask him, when he replies to the debate, to deal with the effect that the new orders will have on the operation of the 1952 Act and to say whether he will inform the House in future about offences that would be tried by British courts if the Visiting Forces Act did not give almost complete immunity to members of foreign forces.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred to Mr. Eric Fletcher, the previous Member of Parliament for my constituency, who in a debate in 1952 said:

"This Bill, in effect, removes from the jurisdiction of the courts or this country a very large number of people. In other words, the members of the visiting Forces and their civilian components will be able to commit crimes which cannot be tried in the courts of this country. That is something which, *prima facie*, shocks those who have been brought up to respect the deep-seated constitutional principles of our land." —[*Official Report*, 17 October 1952; Vol. 505, c. 586.]

He went on to say that there had been nothing like it in this country since the middle ages.

It is extraordinary that the Act should have been on the statute book for so long and that its provisions should be allowed to be extended by the passing of orders late at night. The large number of American forces stationed in this country—about 30,000 of them—have complete immunity from prosecution under both the civil and criminal law. Questions have been asked on a number of occasions about the number of offences that have been committed that have been recognised as offences by the American forces leading to the removal of those individuals from this country, but Ministers on the Treasury Bench have been absolutely silent.

We are entitled to ask when the Minister expects to be in a position to tell us about the operation of this Act. It is unacceptable that he should be able to move yet a further extension of the Act, but not answer questions about the number of drug offences, motoring offences or other offences that have been committed by members of visiting forces who have been allowed to get off scot-free.

The Government say that the collection of information is difficult. There must be something very badly wrong with the arrangements under which American forces are stationed here if no information is passed to the Ministry of Defence about what members of the visiting forces have done.

I hope that the Minister will tell us what information is collected in the Ministry of Defence and whether local police and local courts keep any records of offences committed by members of the visiting forces. I object strongly to the Visiting Forces Act. I see no reason why forces from a foreign power stationed in this country should be exempt from British law. I find it even more offensive that we do not even know what offences they have committed and that all we have is the information

collected by Duncan Campbell and others, which has been printed in the *New Statesman*. I hope that the Minister will answer those points.

11.59 pm

Mr. Stanley: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) asked whether COMSUBEASTLANT would remain at Northwood. It will. He asked why, if COMSUBEASTLANT had international status in 1982, it was now necessary to involve it in the orders. Although it had international status agreed by NATO in 1982, there has not been a convenient opportunity formally to designate it for the purpose of this legislation until the orders came forward. This is a tidying up provision. We have taken advantage of the opportunity created by the designation of UKAIR to designate COMSUBEASTLANT at the same time.

The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Members for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) raised various points about the Visiting Forces Act 1952. It is important to make one or two general observations because from what has been said, it is clear that there is considerable misunderstanding about it. Although the Act is British legislation, it reflects a NATO-wide agreement involving reciprocal arrangements regarding the jurisdiction provisions for military personnel stationed in each others countries.

Exactly the same legal rights which are given to American service men in Britain are enjoyed by British service men in Germany. They are important to our service men there. The Act has now been on the statute book for more than 30 years, and the criticisms that have been expressed by Opposition Members must be seen against the background of several Administrations being responsible for overseeing the Act, which has evidently proved satisfactory to successive Labour Governments.

Mr. Corbyn: In view of what the Minister has said about reciprocal arrangements, can he say whether the German civilian authorities are informed—and publish the information — of the misdemeanours of British service men stationed there as part of the British Army of the Rhine?

Mr. Stanley: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall continue with my speech as I was about to deal with that matter.

The hon. Gentleman is clearly under a misapprehension about the effect of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 if he talks of American service men having widespread immunity from United Kingdom law. The provisions are somewhat complex, but they do not represent overall immunity. The hon. Gentleman might like to read, in *Hansard* of 19 December 1983, the detailed and excellent exposition of the Act's effects by my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), when he was Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. If he does, the hon. Gentleman will see that the full effect of United Kingdom law applied to all offences committed off duty, which are the great majority. Even for offences committed on duty, there is reserved to the host country a right to request the Government of the visiting forces that the right of jurisdiction should remain with the host country and that the Government of the visiting forces should surrender their right to exercise jurisdiction. It is not correct to suggest that this legislation creates some wholesale immunity or exemption from the effect of British law.

The statistics on offences show that more than 2,000 American service men have been convicted in the United Kingdom courts, and that the vast majority of those convictions relate to road traffic offences, which were specifically mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. As to the adequacy of the statistics that are collected within the Government about the operation of the Visiting Forces Act—a point raised by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed — I will draw that matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. His Department has the lead ministerial responsibility for this legislation, and I am sure that he will note the points that have been made on that score in this debate.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the Minister for giving way again. I am interested in what he says about civilian offences committed when troops are off duty, but I am concerned about the actions of American forces on duty — for example, when they have been travelling with the cruise missile conveys in the Salisbury plain area. I have reason to believe that offences have been committed by those soldiers against British civilians, but no action has been taken and no redress is possible for the civilians, because those service men were on duty at the time and the Visiting Forces Act therefore grants immunity. For example, there was a problem when an American vehicle ran into a churchyard wall, causing it severe damage, and slightly injuring some people at the same time.

Mr. Stanley: Any particular details that the hon. Gentleman produces will be examined.

I stress that the provisions of British law apply to American service men here, whether they are on or off duty. The only issue is over the rights of jurisdiction, and those rights can be applied by the Government of the visiting forces in respect of their service men for offences that have been committed on duty, but that does not mean that while visiting service men are here they are not subject to United Kingdom law.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will, I hope, be aware that these orders relate to the designation of COMSUBEASTLANT, which is a NATO headquarters. He was referring to a matter that arose in not a NATO, but a national, context. He will be aware that the loss of the log of HMS Conqueror has been the subject of successive parliamentary statements, and the outcome of the board of inquiry was the subject of detailed investigation by Parliament and of a statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) when he was Secretary of State. I am afraid that I cannot add to that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designations and Privileges) (Amendment) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 12th March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) (Amendment) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 12th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

PETITION

Rolls-Royce plc

12.8 am

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition, which has been signed by more than 267 pensioners of Rolls-Royce plc. These pensioners live in my constituency, in other Bristol constituencies and wider afield, in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Northavon (Mr. Cope), for Woodspring (Sir P. Dean), and for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward), and in and around Coventry.

The petition relates to a difference between a pension that is given to Rolls-Royce pensioners who were members of the former Rolls-Royce pension scheme and other, similar pensioners, who were members of the former Bristol Siddeley Engines pension scheme and who retired between 1978 and 1984.

The petitioners pray:

That this honourable House should ask the Government while it retains its position as sole shareholder in Rolls-Royce plc to procure that the company give equal treatment to those Bristol Siddeley pensioners who retired between 1 April 1978 and 31 December 1983 to the treatment given to such pensioners who retired after 31 December 1983.

I willingly add my support, as indeed do many of the colleagues to whom I referred earlier, to that prayer.

To lie upon the Table.

A34, Stone

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now ajourn.—*[Mr. Portello.]*

12.10 am

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am extremely grateful for this opportunity, even at this late hour, to raise this issue. In the words of the letter that I wrote to Mr. Speaker on 20 March:

"I would be grateful to have the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the need for a bypass of Stone, Staffordshire, in my constituency."

I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for sharing this late hour with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with me and with the Whip on the Government Front Bench. I shall be suitably brief.

Perhaps I can put the problems of Stone — a delightful town and I take this opportunity to invite my hon. Friend the Minister to visit it to see the problems that I am about to describe to the House in practical everyday terms—in the context of the correspondence that I will now recite to the House.

In a letter dated 17 November 1986, Mr. Onions, the county surveyor to the Staffordshire county council—a man whom I respect enormously and who I must say is a revered constituent of mine — wrote to Mr. John Blundell, the chairman of the Stone chamber of trade—and I want a place on record my gratitude, as the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, for the support and encouragement that I have received from him and his officers who are present in the Gallery this evening—as follows:

"As you are probably aware, Stone high street is part of the primary route, the A520. It is the county council policy to encourage heavy commercial vehicles to use the motorway, the trunk road and the primary road network wherever possible instead of the more unsuitable class 2, class 3, and unclassified roads."

Of course, that includes the A34. He went on to say:

"It is not practical to restrict heavy commercial vehicles from using the high street in Stone until such time——"

I use my words carefully—

"as the bypass is constructed."

Mr. Blundell, the chairman of the Stone chamber of trade, subsequently wrote earlier this year to Mr. Onions, stating:

"At a recent meeting of the chamber of trade the question of heavy goods vehicles was again raised by our members, particularly in view of the extensive roadworks to be carried out over the next 16 weeks in the lower section of Stone high street. I enclose a list of 18 different companies who appear to be using Stone high street as a pre-test circuit, and on the grounds of safety and convenience to the shopping public we would request that these vehicles should at least be prevented from using Stone in this way whilst these roadworks are being constructed."

Mr. Onions, the county surveyor, then replied to Mr. Blundell on 23 February:

"As I previously pointed out, high street Stone is part of the primary road network and it is not practical to restrict the movement of heavy lorries until such time as a suitable bypass is available. It is certainly not the intention of the county council to impose a selective ban on training vehicles."

I have raised on behalf of my constituents generally and on behalf of the traders and shoppers in Stone in particular the question of the urgency of the need for a bypass around the town. The Labour county councillor for Stone, Mr. R. D. Osbourne, wrote to Mrs. Elizabeth Ball, the secretary of the Stone chamber of trade, as recently as 7 April 1987 in the following terms:

"Thank you for your invitation to the Stone Chamber of Trade meeting. Unfortunately, I am working away at the present time so I will be unable to attend. Regarding the information about the Stone bypass road, things are not clear at this time. However, as soon as I have returned to Stone, I will be looking into the matter and I will report to the Stone Town Council."

Mrs. Ball wrote to me on the same date as follows:

"You will note that although we have raised the bypass issue in the press, at Town Council meetings and directly to the various local authorities by letter, we have had little active response."

Probably the best two quotes are from County Councillor Osbourne,

"things are not clear at this time,"

and the county surveyor:

"Relief from this long-awaited town-centre bypass is as far off as ever and no place can be found for it in the building programme for the foreseeable future."

Mrs. Ball wrote:

"As you know, a bypass has been talked of for these last 20 years at least, and the public inquiry with the new town council was held five years ago. It would appear"—

here modesty must creep in—

"that no one with the exception of yourself is willing to grasp this issue at any level and we, the Chamber of Trade, support you in what you are trying to do."

It is for these reasons — uncertainty, indefiniteness and procrastination—that I raise the issue this evening. I accept that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will probably not be able to give me an assurance that he can impose upon the county council, as the highway authority, his powers of persuasion to encourage it to bring this much-needed and long-overdue bypass to the top of the Staffordshire county council's priority programme, but I hope that by raising the issue in the Mother of Parliaments, and from here through the media in Staffordshire generally, and in mid-Staffordshire particularly, some pressure will be put upon the county council to be sensitive towards and understanding of the needs and wishes of the electorate of Stone, the shoppers and the ratepayers, for a long-overdue and much-needed bypass.

I say for the benefit of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and of you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I imagine that on your journeys to your constituency you have been through Stone high street from time to time, though not in the direction I am talking about because it is a one-way street.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Mr. Deputy Speaker would be on the bypass.

Mr. Heddle: I am sure that Mr. Deputy Speaker would have been on the bypass, had it been constructed. As it has not been, that has not been possible. I hope that you will use the bypass in due course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope also that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to promise me that it will be constructed in the not-too-distant future.

I shall describe the historic town of Stone. It is an intimate, close-knit town. Its architecture is typified by low-rise buildings of appearance typical of my part of Staffordshire, which gives it a pleasant human scale. The town centre is basically linear in form, with the high street — the main shopping street, a one-way street that is narrow in parts to the extent of 12 ft or 15 ft—forming the main spinal feature. There has been some consolidation of individual parcels of land due chiefly to new development. The general pattern of land use to the rear of high street premises is one of long, narrow curtilages which, together with footpaths and access roads, give a pronounced grain that runs broadly at right angles to the high street.

The high street, which forms the core of the existing conservation area — it is an area in which there is a predominance of buildings of architectural and historic interest, and certainly grades 2 and 3 listed buildings—is of particularly pleasant architectural composition. The street, with its more or less continuous facades of two or three-storey buildings, gently curves and widens uphill. The predominant materials are brick, stone, stucco, tile and slate. A number of the buildings have interesting detailing in some early shop fronts, which still remain, but with the continual thunder of heavy traffic they bear the appearance of being careworn and to an extent show signs of settlement.

There are a number of buildings of individual significance within the town centre, several of which are listed as being of historic and architectural interest. The value of the architecture along the high street and in the adjoining streets lies particularly in the total effect of the group of buildings.

In Stone town centre, the local plan modified by Stafford borough council following an extensive public inquiry and considerable public consultation, said:

"The Staffordshire county council has made provision in its current highway works programme for works in Stone town centre commencing in 1989 or 1990, although any programming of works will ultimately be dependent upon adequate funds."

I ask my hon. Friend to give two assurances if it is possible for him to do so tonight. First, can he assure me that those adequate funds, given the return of this Administration in the election that will intervene between now and 1988, will be available to the county council? Secondly, will he use his powers of persuasion to ensure that those funds are directed towards the provision of a bypass for the town centre of Stone?

The report continues:

"The borough council considers that improvement to the road network in the town centre is to be welcomed in principle. A number of highways converge on the town centre. Traffic currently has a considerable environmental impact on the High street and the adjoining streets, particularly during periods of peak flow when the amenity and the quietude of these streets is seriously affected. The problem is particularly acute to the south of Market place where High street tapers and the carriageway and footways become narrower."

For those hon. Members who have not travelled from north to south along Stone high street I point out that it is narrow. Because it is narrow, heavy commercial vehicles delivering goods to the shops inevitably have to park on the pavements, thus causing inconvenience to young married mothers pushing prams and to the elderly, too, who find it impossible on occasions to move along the footpaths.

Apart from the day-to-day bustle and commercial convenience for which the heavy goods vehicles use the high street, as I have just mentioned in reciting the correspondence to the House, Stone high street is used by a large number of companies to test their drivers in the use of heavy goods vehicles. The county council, whilst trying to encourage them to use the artery roads on the outside of the town, has failed to do so and Stone has become a veritable commercial race track, with the attendant risk to life and limb that that involves.

[Mr. Heddle]

The report to which I referred earlier says:

"It is considered that in order to maximise the benefits of the inner ring road"—

to which my hon. Friend may allude in his reply—

"as a bypass route, complete pedestrianisation of the High street should be pursued as an ultimate aim."

What I am asking my hon. Friend to do in his reply is, first, to assure me, my constituents in general, and the shoppers, traders and chamber of trade in Stone in particular, that those adequate funds will be continually made available so that the bypass, in whatever form and wherever it should be planned, will remain available. Secondly, his Department should use its powers of persuasion and, dare I say, pressure, to try to ensure that Staffordshire county council carries out the wishes of the elected members and the electorate in my constituency so that Stone has its bypass as a matter of urgent priority. As soon as the decision is made and the priority struck, there should be a public consultation exercise to find out whether the electorate and shoppers require pedestrianisation and to ensure that when the bypass comes—soon cannot be soon enough—it is in a form, in a place and of a design and structure that meets the wishes of the majority of my constituents in Stone.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to raise the issue and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for being kind enough to reply.

12.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): It is always a pleasure to share either the Chamber of the House of Commons or a Committee Room with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle). We spent many arduous hours on the Housing and Building Control Bill of 1984 which extended rights to council tenants. My hon. Friend's well-known and well-deserved reputation in matters relating to housing is equalled by his work relating to transport.

I remember my hon. Friend saying to me how much he supported the Government's aim to get through traffic on to through roads so that, as he said, local traffic could be returned to those who are shopping and, in residential areas, to those who are going to school, and to pensioners who want to be able to move around, with or without a car in safety, without being pursued by heavy goods vehicles using unsuitable roads. The work done by my hon. Friend during his time in the House has made it possible for road casualties to be reduced, economic prosperity to be supported and the environment to be improved. No one wants to cover the countryside, or the towns, unnecessarily with concrete and tarmacadam. The occasional building of bypasses, relief roads or link roads allows other thoroughfares to be restored to their proper purpose, which is to allow people to move around in safety.Those three considerations—economic prosperity, environmental relief and road casualty reduction—lie behind what my hon. Friend has described as the keen desire of the people in Stone to have a bypass.

I am grateful also to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) for being here this evening. His is perhaps the unheard hand, guiding the Department of Transport. I am sure that his constituents would like to know that in our stewardship of the Department of Transport since 1979 we have managed, with a reduced budget, to increase capital spending on roads, and to increase money for national roads unlike our predecessors who, from 1974 to 1979 halved the money available for new national roads. Unlike our predecessors, we have not had to put on the immediate braking effect of 1976 when the International Monetary Fund came in to run the country. We have been able to increase the money available through transport supplementary grant to local highway authorities—in the main, to the county councils—that want to promote schemes that are of more than local importance.

As I hope to show in the next few minutes, it is quite clear that Stone's need for a bypass is of more than local interest because of the through traffic that Stone wants to avoid. I probably speak for those coming down the A520, who do not want to go through Stone unnecessarily. Of course, those who do will benefit as will the town centre which my hon. Friend has described as having a closely-knit character, and the low-rise architecture that is familiar to that part of Staffordshire. I think that he said that it was on a pleasant human scale. I should like him to know that I appreciate the one bypass that Stone has because I was born near the A41 in Newport and members of my family live in the western end of the county of Staffordshire,. near Newport. As one who used to go to the races at Uttoxeter, I can say that that line would take me through Stone. Of course, I should confess that I have not put a bet on a horse since the day before the Gold Cup at Cheltenham when I backed two out of three winners and had to buy cream cakes; but perhaps that is by-the-by.

The whole House will be grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the question of a bypass, although I am sure that he will understand when I say, with a slight degree of puzzlement, that no Labour or alliance Members seem to be interested in this subject. My hon. Friend knows that the Government place great emphasis on providing bypasses on our national roads, especially to remove heavy lorries from places where people live, work and do their shopping. Our recent achievements in building bypasses and relief roads in the trunk road network, together with the proposals in the revised programme, will continue to help to resolve the conflict between the needs of residents and those of through traffic. In all, the current programme will provide relief for about 280 communities throughout the country. Even then there are some communities on the national network for which no bypass is planned.

In the mid-1950s the construction of the A34 bypass at Stone brought about a much-needed improvement by taking most of the north-south traffic away from the town. My hon. Friend has drawn the attention of the House to the other route passing through Stone, which carries considerable volumes of traffic.

For those less familiar with the locality, I should explain that Stone lies roughly midway between Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. The county council, in its wisdom, may have decided to concentrate on some other areas rather than Stone and my hon. Friend, local councillors and the chamber of trade will argue the case for Stone. I would not direct the priorities of the county council. They are, rightly, determined locally. I hope that the county council will read the debate.

I recognise the tribute that my hon. Friend paid to Mr. Onions, the county surveyor, and his staff. Their work in Staffordshire and on the representative bodies for the highway professionals is well respected and Mr. Onions

makes a contribution well beyond the county. I do not want any of my remarks this evening to be taken as a criticism of the council. Unlike Mary Goldring, who in her "Analysis" programme this evening thought that the Government had been trapped into doing the job that is rightly done by local highway authorities, we have a proper partnership on roads, where we look after the national roads, local councils look after the local roads and for local roads of more than local importance the transport supplementary grant arrangements appear to be working well.

My hon. Friend forgot to tell us how the history of Stone is closely linked with the Trent and Mersey canal, which is located on the western edge of the town centre. Perhaps the canal does not provide the type of bypass for freight traffic, so perhaps I should bring the House more up to date. It is Stafford borough council's intention to extend the present conservation area to include the canal and its setting and to exploit this important amenity resource by encouraging canal orientated development or re-use of canal side sites and to improve public access by providing new footpath routes and cycleways between the town centre and the canal site.

Although Stone no longer bears the brunt of A34 traffic, it lies at the junction of a number of highways, including two important local roads which generate a good deal of through traffic—some 9,000 vehicles a day, 10 per cent. of which are heavy vehicles. These are the A51 north-west/south-east route and the A520 north-east/south-west route. Traffic currently has a considerable environmental impact on the high street and adjoining roads, particularly at peak times, when the amenity and peace of these streets is seriously affected. This is compounded by congestion caused by roadside loading and unloading. Bus stops along the high street can also add to the congestion. I am merely describing the traffic facts in Stone and not criticising the buses or those who use them.

As my hon. Friend said, in May last year Stafford borough council adopted the Stone town centre local plan, which provides for an improved highway network agreed with the local highway authority, Staffordshire county council. A package of highway schemes has been proposed which has as its main element an inner link road to the north east of the high street, but with associated provision of rear access or service roads, re-siting of car parking facilities, re-routing of buses and so on, leading to the eventual pedestrianisation of the high street.

The policies and proposals in the plan are aimed at enhancing the existing character of the town centre, while preserving its vitality and encouraging its efficient functioning as a shopping and commercial centre. My hon. Friend should be congratulated on working closely with the chamber of trade. Sometimes people argue that chambers of trade are interested only in themselves, but plainly they are interested in their customers, just as politicians are interested in their electorates. It is a natural way of representing the true community interests of a local area.

All these are praiseworthy aims indeed. Design of the new road schemes will need to balance highway and environmental objectives by seeking, for example, to keep traffic flowing by restricting the number of turning movements to those needed to give adequate access to the town centre, while minimising the visual impact of any road system by avoiding the demolition of listed or other interesting buildings. My hon. Friend reminded me that we are discussing local roads which are of course, the responsibility of the local highway authority. Staffordshire county council is able to establish where the needs are in its area. It must decide what the priorities are and how best to promote the necessary improvements.

Local highway authorities submit a transport policies and programme each year to the Department. These documents set out what local road improvements the highway authority wants to do. They contain a programme of likely expenditure according to the priorities for particular schemes, the resources available for carrying them out and the extent of the planning and design work needed. I have not yet mentioned the various statutory processes through which all highway improvement schemes must go. My hon. Friend said that he knew that the schemes would not necessarily satisfy everybody, but that if funds could be made available and a consensus arrived at that would be generally welcomed in Stone.

The TPP is the basis of an authority's bid for highway capital allocation and transport supplementary grant. Grant is paid towards firmly programmed schemes of more than local importance—that is, schemes on roads carrying long distance through traffic. Schemes are not normally approved for grant unless they are due to start in the following year.

In last year's TPP, Staffordshire included the A520 town centre bypass in Stone in its longer term programme. Broadly speaking, that probably means a start in five to 10 years' time. It has presumably taken that decision in the light of competing pressures elsewhere within the county. This is a matter for it and is not an issue on which I would wish to intervene. It is not for me to say which schemes in Staffordshire are the most important. My hon. Friend may decide to take up the question of priority with councillors in Staffordshire. I can tell him that if Staffordshire decided to bring the scheme forward in its programme I would give it careful consideration in assessing whether TSG should be paid. It is certainly the sort of scheme for which TSG is intended. It is on a primary route and will clearly relieve the town centre of through traffic. However, the question whether grant could be paid would rest on the priority that Staffordshire was able to give the scheme, the total resources that were available and the comparative merits of other schemes all over the country that would be competing for funds. My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot give an advance commitment, but what I have said about it being a primary route and the relief of the town centre is the best indication that I can give.

I understand the problems that counties have in putting schemes in order of priority. I intend to maintain assistance for counties in the way that we have in the past. No Government can commit themselves for future years, but if we can continue to have a response from a Government who are willing to take necessary decisions, the sort of infrastructure spending that is talked about by Opposition parties—what the Prime Minister and I call spending on roads, bypasses and relief roads — can continue to grow in the way in which it has done in the past few years.

Some people may argue that there is not much politics in road safety, bypasses or environmental improvements. They are wrong. Everyone in the House recognises that if we could add capital spending and give the sort of relief for which people are asking we would get the kind of political response that would return a Government—

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

whenever the election comes within the next year or so —who could continue the sort of work that we have been doing, which is not to be mean or over-optimistic, but to provide the sort of increased programme of bypasses and relief roads for which my hon. Friend so eloquently argued. I thank my hon. Friend for the way in which he opened the debate, and I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Southgate for his attendance.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 9 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Animals (Scotland) Act 1987
2. Broadcasting Act 1987
3. Gaming (Amendment) Act 1987
4. Petroleum Act 1987
5. Minors' Contracts Act 1987
6. Recognition of Trusts Acts 1987
7. Reverter of Sites Act 1987
8. Exeter City Council Act 1987

PRIVATE BUSINESS

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 23 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Lough Neagh

1. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will initiate a study on the long-term effects of toxic waste in Lough Neagh.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): A study by the Ulster university on chironomids in the Lennymore bay area of Lough Neagh is under way. This, together with the studies of algal growth and pesticide residues already being carried out by the Department of Agriculture, will indicate the effects of toxic waste.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Minister confirm that in January this year there was a significant spillage of a highly toxic chemical called tributyl tin oxide into Lough Neagh and that, while it may not pose an immediate threat to people who drink the water, there is a serious possibility that this chemical is dangerous to wildlife and plantlife in the lough? Does the Minister agree that a survey should be carried out into the effects of that spillage so that we know what is happening and to give an assurance to local people who are concerned about it?

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that there was a spillage, but as soon as it occurred my Department advised the Department of Agriculture, the Fishery Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland and the residents living near where the spillage took place. Three separate laboratories analysed samples from the lough, and I am pleased to tell the hon. Gentleman that the spillage was confined to the immediate area where the tributyl tin oxide was spilt. There was a feeling that perhaps the Department would have been better advised to have made a statement about the spillage as soon as it occurred. We took the view that that may have caused unnecessary alarm about the nature of it. When we checked, we found that the spillage was closely confined. Therefore, the results will not affect the lough. At the same time, we are ensuring that studies are taking place within the lough to check exactly what the position is.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my hon. Friend, with his Ulster nurture, recall that Finn McCool plucked out the land where Lough Neagh now is, hurled it into the sea, thus creating the Isle of Man, and that Lough Neagh is reputed in consequence to be bottomless? Did the studies to which my hon. Friend referred take into account the bottomlessness of Lough Neagh?

Mr. Needham: I am afraid that that leaves me slightly out of my depth. My information is that Lough Neagh is a shallow lough, and my hon. Friend and I would not be likely to sink very far in it. I shall refer his question to Finn McCool for verification.

Sir Peter Mills: Will my hon. Friend take account of the fact that in days gone by I have not only fished in the lough but eaten the excellent eels that come from it? Will he bear in mind that it is important to protect the eels and the eel industry over there, because when smoked the eels are probably the finest in the world?

Mr. Needham: The ecology of Lough Neagh is of extreme importance, not only because of the quality of the eels and the pollan, which is a freshwater herring almost unique in the world, but because of the salmon and the trout. I assure my hon. Friend that I will do exactly as he asks, because I enjoy eating them as well.

Accident and Emergency Services

2. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the chairman of the Eastern health board to discuss accident and emergency services in Belfast.

Mr. Needham: I have frequent meetings, both formal and informal, with the chairmen of all four health and social services boards to discuss the range of services for which they are responsible. I met the Eastern board chairman on 2 March and 9 March and expect to meet him again at his board's forthcoming accountability review.

Mr. Nellist: Did the most recent meeting that the Minister had with the chairman of the health board reflect the deep concern that is felt in the Lisburn area over the potential closure of the Lissue hospital, which is a specialist hospital serving the young mentally handicapped, and the serious possible closure of the Mater hospital casualty unit, which serves north Belfast, which is being considered by the board? Were that closure to go ahead, it would force people to travel up to 30 milies to Ballymena or to the city hospital and, therefore, potentially across sectarian lines where conflict may exist. Why are the Minister and the Secretary of State underfunding the Health Service in Belfast and Northern Ireland to such an extent that closures of such seriousness as this have to be considered?

Mr. Needham: Lissue hospital has had a very long life. The facilities that it offers are not what we would wish to offer to children in such conditions. The reason for the closure is to ensure that the patients are better cared for elsewhere. Northern Ireland has a much higher rate of attendance at accident and emergency units than anywhere else in the United Kingdom: 441 per 1,000 in Northern Ireland, compared with only 293 per 1,000 in England and 251 per 1,000 in Scotland. Less than 1 per cent. of the accident and emergency attendances are a result of terrorism, which is one of the areas of concern that have arisen over the closure of accident and emergency units. We are asking the boards to consult most fully with everybody involved to ensure that any proposals that come forward are properly discussed and thought through, and any money that we may save will, of course, be put back into the Health Service.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of us who have recently received his package of information about Belfast, both in terms of the good news and the potentially exciting news in that great city, are very pleased to have received it and hope that he will continue to argue the case both on this side of the water and in the rest of Europe and the world so that Belfast may continue to go from strength to strength?

Mr. Needham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that in the Health Service we have as good, if not better, facilities in Belfast than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. The city as a whole has suffered in the past two days but, that aside, the city is undergoing a regeneration, the likes of which it has not seen for a century or more, supported by the public and private sectors to a great degree. The determination of the people of Belfast to live through the problems that they are currently facing is an example to us all.

Republic of Ireland (Meetings)

3. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what meetings he has had with the Irish Government since their general election.

6. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I met the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lenihan, on Monday. We had an informal discussion on a wide range of matters, including the future work of the conference. I look forward to working with Mr. Lenihan as co-chairman of the conference in the months ahead in the interests of both our countries. In addition, yesterday, under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I had a valuable discussion with a distinguished delegation of Members of the Dail.

Sir John Farr: Has my right hon. Friend had any indication from the new Irish Government of the way in which they intend to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Will he ask that Government to launch an energetic campaign to stamp out the terrorists who are engaged in gun-running across the border?

Mr. King: I certainly received full assurances, both in the meeting that I had with Mr. Lenihan, the Foreign Minister and Tanaiste, and with the Fianna Fail representatives whom I met yesterday with the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It is also clear, from the statements of the Taoiseach, Mr. Haughey, in the Dail, that the Irish Government accept the Anglo-Irish Agreement as an international, binding agreement that they will honour and implement. It was clear from my discussions with Mr. Lenihan, with whom I discussed a wide range of matters, that they recognise clearly — as is evident to hon. Members on both sides of the House—the damage that is done to the economy, and therefore to employment, throughout the island of Ireland by the scourge of terrorism. They are clearly determined to seek every constructive way in which to reduce and eventually eliminate terrorism from the island.

Mr. Canavan: If the purpose of the so-called Anglo-Irish Agreement is to help to bring peace to Northern Ireland, how can the Secretary of State justify to the Irish Government—or to anyone else for that matter—the heavy, provocative police presence at the recent funeral ceremonies? Whatever the organisation to which deceased people may have belonged during their lives, would it not be in the best interests of all concerned to let people bury their dead in peace?

Mr. King: It would be the fervent wish of all responsible hon. Members that the dead, from whatever quarter, community, faction or element they come, should be buried in peace, with dignity and without any paramilitary displays. Over the years it has given enormous offence to see deliberate, provocative paramilitary demonstrations of

that kind. If the hon. Gentleman remembers only the events in Belfast this week, I should remind him of the events in Londonderry two weeks ago when, contrary to the wishes of the family itself, and in flagrant breach of the standards and laws of the church, two gunmen with guns appeared out of the church and fired a volley over the coffin.

The reality is that the Royal Ulster Constabulary is faced with a difficult dilemma. It has a responsibility to uphold the law and it is entitled to expect full support from all corners of the community in fulfilling that duty. I know that the last thing that the RUC would want to do isto attend and police funerals of that kind. It would much rather have the confidence and knowledge that those funerals will be conducted in a thoroughly proper and law-abiding way, without deliberate provocation of that kind.

Mr. Gow: At his meeting with the Irish Foreign Minister on Monday, did my right hon. Friend express satisfaction at the extent to which the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been able to bring peace, stability and reconciliation to the Province? If it should become clear to my right hon. Friend that the agreement cannot achieve those objectives, which he and I share, will he propose some change?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend's views on the Anglo-Irish Agreement are well known to the House, which respects the principled stand that he has taken on it. I have never maintained that the Anglo-Irish Agreement could suddenly, in a short period of time, transform attitudes and prejudices that stretch over all the troubles and go back over centuries. I challenge any hon. Member to disagree with my belief that we are more likely to succeed in making the life of both communities in Northern Ireland happier, more prosperous and more secure, not by hostility towards and distrust of the Government of the Republic, but by seeking to co-operate in a way that protects the legitimate interests of the majority. The agreement does that and it has been recognised by successive Irish Governments. Both major parties in the Dail have given the assurance that the agreement is a binding undertaking. The agreement protects the interests of the majority and recognises the legitimate concerns of the minority.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Why did the Secretary of State deliberately go out of his way on a previous occasion to inform the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) that one of his predecessors in office had wished to proceed on an entirely different policy towards Northern Ireland? What was his motive in putting that on the record?

Mr. King: I think that I had better establish exactly what the point is that the right hon. Gentleman is making. Having done that, I shall be in a better position to answer his question.

Mr. Stanbrook: Do the members of the Government of the Irish Republic still adhere to the view expressed by their leader before the general election, that the Anglo-Irish Agreement breaches the constitution of the Irish Republic? As that is a correct view, what do they propose to do about it?

Mr. King: I am interested to hear my hon. Friend's statement that it is a correct view, but that view has not been upheld by any court. My understanding is that that is not the view that is held. We accept the agreement in the spirit in which it was entered into by both sides. We accept also in good faith, and readily, the clear assurances that have been given by the new Taoiseach, Mr. Haughey, and by Mr. Lenihan personally to me, that they accept the agreement as an international treaty that is binding on the Irish Government, that it is the practice of Irish Governments to honour international agreements and that they intend to honour it.

Mr. Mason: Will the Secretary of State raise with the Irish Foreign Minister the damnable cross-border mortar bomb attacks on British troops? Will he ask the Foreign Minister and the Taoiseach whether they are prepared to deploy units of the Irish army across the southern border, where terrorists are operating in relative safety and bombing British troops? If the Taoiseach and the Foreign Minister really believe in working with the right hon. Gentleman on a successful Anglo-Irish Agreement, will he put that to them and let that be their test?

Mr. King: As a previous holder of my office, the right hon. Gentleman is familiar with some of the problems that we face. He will know that, with the length of the border, it is extremely difficult to police or to patrol with security forces every inch of it. I am satisfied that we can look to the Irish Government to co-operate fully with us, and the same can be said of their security forces, the Garda and the army. I have discussed this matter with the new Irish Foreign Minister and I can give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance that I shall be pursuing this matter further with him.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I thank my right hon. Friend for his balanced statement on the difficult problems that the Royal Ulster Constabulary faces in the policing of funerals. I am sure that will be widely appreciated.

When speaking to the Irish Foreign Minister, did my right hon. Friend tell him that it is his intention to impose on the men and women of the RUC discipline and complaints arrangements that the House has rejected for all other British police forces, and that do not and could not apply to the Garda south of the border?

Mr. King: We did not discuss that matter. It is an issue that will have to come before the House and I think that my hon. Friend will understand if I do not pursue that topic further this afternoon.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Secretary of State agree that the reason why the IRA fires volleys of shots over coffins is to get a few moments of publicity and propaganda? Is it not rather counter-productive to create circumstances that present it with three days of worldwide propaganda and publicity as a result of the arrangements that were made to cover the incident over the past weekend?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman highlights part of the dilemma that the RUC faces. It would be a serious matter to allow unimpeded paramilitary displays at funerals. The answer lies in a responsible attitude and a clear recognition that the law must be observed. If the law is not observed, and if such organisations intend on every possible occasion to stage paramilitary displays, police action will inevitably be required, and that will raise problems for the RUC. However, I understand well the difficulties present when certain people have no inhibitions about using even a dead man as a propaganda weapon.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: The Flags and Emblems (Displays) Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 is shortly to be

repealed. However, has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to discuss with Irish Ministers the deeply offensive misuse of the Irish tricolour, particularly at IRA funerals? Does he accept that most people find that a terribly offensive, obnoxious, cheap party political stunt by cowards who do considerable damage to the cause of unity in Ireland?

Mr. King: The Flags and Emblems (Displays) Act has been abolished. The legislation has passed through the House, and the Order in Council has now been made.

The tricolour aspect is clearly covered by the question whether it is likely to lead to a breach of the peace. The RUC did not object to a tricolour being placed on the coffin. It is the paramilitary displays that give the greatest offence and are unacceptable.

Mr. Archer: As one of the specific matters referred to in the Anglo-Irish Agreement is the improvement of relations between the security forces and the community —and having regard to the events in the Ardoyne to which reference has been made, and which demonstrate that those relations require sensitivity and sense on the part of those under pressure—did the Secretary of State discuss with Mr. Lenihan what could be done within the framework of the agreement to improve those relations? Can he confirm a report in this week's *Irish Post* that the Dublin Government have asked for the Stalker case to be placed on the agenda of the Inter-Governmental Conference? If so, will he agree?

Mr. King: I am not aware of any such request. In any case, it is not possible for me to discuss the matter, because reports are now with the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland and the Chief Constable. The matter is not within my domain, but it can be dealt with through the normal legal processes that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows extremely well.

It is no secret that the Irish Government believe that, in the interests of the minority and in the fight against terrorism, it is crucial to take every possible step to improve relations between the minority community and the security forces. A number of aspects of that are under discussion, and I can confirm that the Irish Government are concerned about the possible propaganda use that the IRA and other terrorists might make of the events of the past couple of days.

Electricity Generation

4. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his policy towards the future of electricity generation in Northern Ireland.

8. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on his policy towards plans to use lignite for the generation of electricity in Northern Ireland.

10. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to give approval to the Northern Ireland Electricity Service for phase 2 of Kilroot power station.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): Electricity generation policy in Northern Ireland is aimed at reducing the Province's over-dependence on oil-fired generating capacity and at promoting efficiency within the electricity supply industry.

To this end a number of options for a new generating capacity required in the mid-1990s are being considered. These include a lignite-fired minemouth power station, for which proposals have been received from Northern Ireland Electricity and two private sector companies; phase 2 of Kilroot as either a coal-fired or dual coal/oil-fired facility; and interconnection with Scotland. No decisions can be taken until all these options have been fully evaluated.

Mr. Bellingham: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. When will he be in a position to make an announcement, particularly about the lignite-fired power station, because the Antrim Power Company Limited has spent a good deal of money on its tender? It is an entirely privately backed consortium, supported by a number of medium-sized and large companies and private individuals. If the company obtains the contract, it will be a big boost for Northern Ireland, and particularly for inward investment.

Mr. Viggers: I agree with my hon. Friend that the private generation of electricity might indeed be a considerable boost for Northern Ireland for several reasons—the possibility of cheaper electricity arising out of private sector efficiencies, the welcome boost to the construction industry and to the economy generally, and the impact that such a significant demonstration of confidence would have on Northern Ireland's industry. However, it is not possible at this point to put a timetable on the decisions, because they are extremely complex and involve a number of issues.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Minister aware that all the unions involved in the electricity industry in Northern Ireland are bitterly opposed to any schemes that would lead to the establishment of a private generating capacity in Northern Ireland? They are particularly concerned that, because any contract that was then entered into with the Northern Ireland Electricity Service would be at a fixed price, it would eventually be terribly costly for the consumer. Is the Minister further aware that all the arguments that he advanced regarding generating stations could apply equally in the public as in the private sector? Does he realise that Opposition Members believe that the guinea pig scheme that is suggested for Northern Ireland would be introduced into the United Kingdom, since in the past the Government have used Northern Ireland as an exploratory body for draconian anti-civil liberty measures that have then been introduced into this country?

Mr. Viggers: We are well aware of the trade union representations. A number of representations have been made on the Electricity Supply (Amdt) (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 that has been sent out for consultation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I have agreed to meet union representatives. As to the hon. Gentleman's further points, I submit that there could be substantial advantages in private sector involvement in electricity generation in Northern Ireland. I have not had discussions with ministerial colleagues who are responsible for electricity generation in Great Britain. I am responsible only for Northern Ireland. Our absolute determination is to do the best for electricity consumers in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister assure the House that, when a decision is made between the option of going ahead with the phase 2 of Kilroot—which is preferred by the Northern Ireland Electricity Service, which is responsible for the provision of electricity in Northern Ireland—and the option of private generation of electricity by means of a lignite power station—which is being promoted by the Bechtel corporation and the Hanson Trust—the fact that in 1986 £50,000 went from the Hanson Trust into the funds of the Conservative party will not influence the decision that is made?

Mr. Viggers: It would be grossly improper to take a decision on such a basis, and I think it is most unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman should have made such an allegation. He is, of course, interested in the project on a long-term basis, and I am fully conscious of his interest in Kilroot station being developed, which would use coal. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall give the most careful consideration to that possibility.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister confirm that equipment has been purchased for phase 2 of the Kilroot station? If he is looking for efficiency, as he said in answer to an earlier question, would it not be grossly inefficient if equipment that had already been bought was not able to be put to use?

Mr. Viggers: Equipment has been purchased for the completion of phase 2 of the Kilroot power station, but the long-term interests of electricity consumers in Northern Ireland are best served by making sure that the contract as a whole over the life of the station — whichever station it may be that is developed — is the most advantageous and provides consumers with the cheapest and most secure form of electricity. The capital cost of developing Kilroot could be less significant in making the final decision than the fact that a cheaper source of fuel might be available, because fuel is more significant than the initial capital cost. However, no decision has been taken on the matter.

Mr. Michael Brown: I hope that my hon. Friend will not take too much notice of what has been said by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). Surely the greatest interest is the interest of consumers in Northern Ireland, particularly industrial consumers, who for far too long have found that their energy costs, particularly at Harland and Wolff, in aircraft production and in a whole range of industries in Northern Ireland, are much too dear. If the private sector has a contribution to make to reducing energy costs, it should be given every opportunity to do so.

Mr. Viggers: The private sector construction, and perhaps operation of such a station might provide economies. It is one of the factors that will be taken into account when we make our decision. Brown lignite, the fuel source, is indigenous to Northern Ireland and provides the possibility of a breakthrough for cheaper energy for Northern Ireland. Should that be possible, and should we decide to pursue that route, it might provide a substantial boost to the economy of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archer: If the options are still to be considered and no decision has yet been taken, is it not premature and provocative to lay an enabling order to "introduce competition" into the industry? Does it surprise the Minister that that created great anxiety among employees and consumers?

Mr. Viggers: I am grateful for the fact that the right hon. and learned Gentleman used the expression "enabling legislation", because indeed it is such, broadly replicating the terms of the Energy Act 1983 in Northern Ireland. This is enabling legislation. It does not commit the Government to a decision, because no decision has yet been taken. It is taking the Government some while to come to a conclusion because we are making the most industrious effort to ensure that we have all the facts available to us. We believe that we can reach certainty about the price of brown lignite on a long-term contract, the object being to have a fixed price or a price on a formula for the life of the station. What is less easy is to fix the price of coal on a long-term basis. That is also an important factor.

Irish National Liberation Army

5. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reports he has received from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regarding murders of members of the terrorist organisation known as the Irish National Liberation Army, carried out by other members of the same organisation.

Mr. Tom King: I receive regular reports on a wide range of security related matters from the Chief Constable. The contents of those reports are confidential. I know, however, that the RUC is making every effort to bring those responsible for these murders, and every other terrorist crime, to justice.

Mr. Latham: Are not these deplorable gangland killings more reminiscent of the streets of Palermo or Don Corleone's New York than the United Kingdom? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it should finally be obvious to even the most muddle-headed romantic American-Irishman that he should not send a nickel to terrorist thugs such as these?

Mr. King: It is certainly true that those incidents and those appalling murders that have been committed have given, in some ways, a clearer insight into the total bankruptcy and viciousness of the terrorists involved in campaigns in Northern Ireland. I very much underline what my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Flannery: As an aside to the internecine struggle in INLA, is there any suggestion that the shootings and killings have gone up this year compared to this time last year?

Mr. King: The figures are not dissimilar from last year. Obviously, we very much regret the level of casualties that there have been, but one must recognise that the level of casualties is much lower than it was some years ago in the middle 1970s.

District Heating Schemes

7. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has yet received proposals from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive concerning district heating schemes on the Cromac estate, and the Sandy Row and Lower Newtownards areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I have now received from the Housing Executive a formal proposal to remove the district heating scheme from the Cromac estate. The proposal is being examined and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when I have reached a decision.

I do not expect the Housing Executive to make proposals for the district heating systems at Sandy Row and Lower Newtownards road until it has completed consultation with tenants served by these schemes.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister aware that consultation took place with the tenants of the houses in those area and there was an overwhelming majority in favour of retaining the district heating schemes in their dwellings? Is the Minister also aware that there are now on the market efficient meters by which pre-paid heat could be obtained and, therefore, there would be no income collected for heat with the rents? If there is any value to be attached to the consultations that took place, is it not in the best interests of the tenants to retain district heating and thus obtain some value for the money spent on providing this heating scheme for those areas? Will the Minister rule that the district heating is to be retained, and agree to the tenants' request?

Mr. Needham: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. Of course, I shall take into careful consideration the points he has made. I must say that at Cromac a majority of 65 per cent. of the tenants, responding to consultation, favoured the retention of the scheme, but that was a minority of the total number of tenants. Clearly, the Housing Executive must take that into account, but it must also take into account value for money considerations, the viability of the scheme and debt control. Having said that, clearly one would like to do what one can to meet the tenants' wishes. However, it is not just the considerations of the tenants that the Housing Executive rightly has to consider when looking at these schemes.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Minister impress upon the Housing Executive how wrong it is to create in Northern Ireland Housing Executive houses heating systems that the tenants simply cannot afford, and that the priority should be that which is best and cheapest for the tenants rather than that which is cheapest for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive?

Mr. Needham: I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a great interest in these things and does a great deal on behalf of his constituents when these matters are raised. Previously, the heating scheme that we are discussing was much more expensive, but there was a reduction of 15 per cent. last year and 15 per cent. this year. There will be no increase in the prices of district heating during the course of this year. Therefore, the various systems of heating do not vary in cost as much as they did. In those circumstances, one will clearly do what one can to take into account the views of the tenants.

Security

12. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security in the Province.

16. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about cross-border security.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Although there exists a significant Republican terrorist threat to border areas of Northern Ireland, enhanced security co-operation between the security forces north and south of the border will continue to help to combat that threat. A programme of measures designed to improve security co-operation has been developed under article 9(*a*) of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and we look forward to continuing discussions with Ministers of the new Irish Government about further progress in this area.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my hon. Friend for that most helpful reply. I congratulate him and our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on bringing forward these important proposals to close a number of routes on the border. Does he agree that there have been more than 12 border incursions in the past two months, some caused by poor map reading and some purely by error of judgment? May I suggest that the next time he meets Irish Government Ministers he puts pressure on them for a give and take policy because, while the closing of these routes is meant to keep our boys in, it is also meant to stop the boys from abroad coming across on IRA terrorist excursions. There must be some give and take on both sides.

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend should not underestimate the degree of co-operation that exists on the border. I hope that there will be a growing recognition that when security forces from both jurisdictions have to operate right up to the border, occasional mistakes must occur. I hope that there will be an understanding of the circumstances in which that can sometimes happen.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I congratulate my hon. Friend and all concerned on the conclusion of the unfortunate affair at Magilligan. May I ask him whether he thinks that it is consonant with the Anglo-Irish Agreement that when helicopters of the Irish Air Corps come across the border, presumably in pursuit of terrorism, Her Majesty's Government find it necessary to raise the matter? Conversely, is it really consonant with the Anglo-Irish Agreement that when British soldiers place a listening device just across the border for the protection of human life, it should be necessary for the Dublin Government to raise the matter and for Her Majesty's Government to make amends? Should not the security forces of both countries make each other welcome in each other's territory in pursuit of terrorism?

Mr. Scott: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks about the outcome of the Magilligan incident, where it was clear from the outset that this was a futile exercise and would certainly not achieve the aim that those who took part in it had in mind. I repeat what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) that I hope there will be an increasing understanding on both sides that in the operation against the common enemy, the terrorist, the actions of security forces of both sides operating right up to the border may result in occasional incursions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To what extent is cross-border security being affected by the allegations of Holroyd, Wallace and Miller? Does the Minister accept the proposition that if there are any civil servants or any officers, former or present, of the security services or any persons in the military anywhere in the United Kingdom

who have any allegations to make about the programme of destabilisation of Labour in the mid-1970s, or about the campaign of terrorism against the Irish Government in the mid-1970s, they should make statements and that information should be brought into the public domain in the public interest?

Mr. Scott: Not a shred of evidence has ever been advanced to suggest that the allegations of Holroyd and Wallace have any foundation whatsoever. I cannot see how they can have any effect on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: As the emergency in the Province has now lasted for 17 years, as only last night we further revised legislation to deal with that emergency, as, since the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we have sought to improve cross-border security and to reassure the minority Nationalist community in the North, and as the violence continues, is it not time that we reappraised the entire security operation in the Province?

Mr. Scott: The basis of the security policy that has operated since 1976, with the police taking the primary role in support of the Army, has steadily reduced the impact of violence in Northern Ireland. That policy is based on the right premise and will continue in that way. I take the opportunity to express gratitude to the RUC and the Army for the efforts that they make on behalf of the entire community in the Province.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 April 1987.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later this afternoon, including one with King Hussein of Jordan.

Mr. Ashley: Will the Prime Minister find time today to ask her Ministers to reconsider the treatment that they give to disabled people in relation to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986? Does she know that, despite the barrage of Government propaganda, over 1,000 severely disabled people came to Westminster yesterday to voice their resentment because they feel cheated and betrayed? However, they did not receive any concessions, and not one Minister from the responsible Department was there to listen to them. What kind of treatment is that?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, sections 4, 8(1), 9 and 10 of the Disabled Persons Act were implemented on 1 April. These sections clarify the duty of local social services authorities under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 — *[Interruption.]*—to consider the needs of disabled people when requested, and provide for local social services authorities to improve their assessments of the needs of disabled people. On sections 5 and 6 of the Act, which undoubtedly arose yesterday, we have said that we should like to bring these provisions into effect in time to benefit disabled school leavers leaving full-time education this summer and we are urgently consulting the local authorities about achieving that.

Mr. Hunter: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the process whereby bishops of the Church of England are appointed, her role in that process and the criteria that influence her judgment?

The Prime Minister: Before my time, and by agreement with the leaders of the Opposition and the other main parties at the time, a procedure was set up. It has been honoured scrupulously since 1979, as I am sure it was honoured before that time.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall saying a fortnight ago to her hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and to the House that she saw the Cable and Wireless issue as a test case of how open the Japanese market really is? In the wake of the fruitless visit to Tokyo of her hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, does she think that the Japanese have passed, or failed, the test?

The Prime Minister: The Cable and Wireless issue is still under discussion with the Japanese Government — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may not like it, but that is the fact. My hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has not yet returned from his visit to the far east.

Mr. Kinnock: That does not make the visit any less fruitless — *[Interruption.]* The Prime Minister made it clear that we got the brush-off on all counts in Tokyo. *[Interruption.]* What will she do—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us and, indeed, an interested country, what she will do to protect British interests in relation to the Japanese? Will she operate fully the powers under the Financial Services Act 1986? Will she operate powers under the Telecommunications Act 1984? Most important, what will she do to turn round a trade deficit with Japan that has increased fourfold while she has been Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: In relation to the right hon. Gentleman's opening remark, he is an expert in fruitless visits. My hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made clear our willingness, if necessary, to use reciprocity powers under the Financial Services Act, and the right hon. Gentleman is aware that an order was laid for that purpose about a week ago. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed trade with Japan with his European counterparts last weekend—the right hon. Gentleman will be aware that trade matters and initiatives must be taken by the Community—and they agree that urgent consideration should be given to the issue by trade experts, who will meet in Brussels tomorrow. Those experts are expected to examine proposals put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on more effective protection against dumping of components, possibly unbinding of tariffs on certain products as a result of Community enlargement, and measures that may be necessary to avoid diversion if the United States acts against Japan — *[Interruption.]* The answer is long because a great deal is being done.

Mr. Kinnock: We heard all that, but what action will the Prime Minister take under existing statutes?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman can neither know nor understand the provisions, arrangements and agreements that we have with Europe. That is precisely why I had to tell him that as a result of the initiatives of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary a meeting is being convened tomorrow to discuss the three matters that I outlined. I shall tell the right hon. Gentleman of them again. The matters to be discussed are effective protection against the dumping of components by Japan, possible unbinding of tariffs on certain products as a result of Community enlargement, and measures that might be necessary to avoid diversion if the United States acts against Japan. The committee is to meet tomorrow. It is within the competence of the European Economic Community. Would the right hon. Gentleman leave the Community?

Mr. Bowen Wells: Is my right hon. Friend aware that on 5 May the all-party committee on overseas development is to launch a report on managing Third world debt? With her powerfully increased reputation since her visit to Moscow, can I tempt her to undertake another initiative on an intractable international situation and to find a way to solve the Third world debt problem, as the report suggests? Could she find a way in which we may help the impoverished countries of Africa to resume growth and at the same time begin to cut unemployment in the United Kingdom by increasing our exports to those countries?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will be aware that the United Kingdom has converted aid loans to grants, particularly in respect of many sub-Saharan countries, because they are the poorest. Indeed, we have almost completed that process. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is proposing that other countries follow suit. We are fully aware that those countries are not only heavily indebted, but grindingly poor and many are unlikely to be able to repay interest or some of the capital that has been loaned. That is why we have taken this action and why my right hon. Friend proposes that other countries follow suit.

Dr. Owen: It is absolutely right that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. Owen *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. Owen: Is the Prime Minister aware that the European Community is the right mechanism for dealing with unfair trading practices by the Japanese Government? But would it not assist the European Community and our other partners to take firm action if the British Government would help the European Community science and technology initiative to build up our industry so that we can compete with the Japanese?

The Prime Minister: We have proposed that the framework agreement should consist of some 4·2 billion ecu over five years. The amount of European research and development on these matters is only about 2 per cent. of the total that takes place. Many people say too easily that research and development are of necessity good, without looking at the results. The right hon. Gentleman is very much aware that we have spent a great deal on research and development without getting out the industrial results that we should have had. It is that aspect to which we must give our attention. With respect, I do not think that the first and second parts of the right hon. Gentleman's question were really related.

Mr. Fry: Does my right hon. Friend accept that in the Government's stand on trade with Japan the vast bulk of the British people will be firmly behind her and her Ministers and relieved that at long last the British Government intend to take a strong line? That will make a change from what previous Labour Governments have done. Will she please bear in mind in the negotiations that she has announced that there are some British industries that are particularly heavily penalised? I put in a plea on behalf of the British leather manufacturing industry, which, after a very small quota, has to surmount a tariff of 60 per cent. to export to Japan? Will she please ask our negotiators to do their best for that industry?

The Prime Minister: I am, of course, aware of that particular industry and the problems that Japanese imports cause. As my hon. Friend is aware, if we were to take action alone, first, we should probably be taken to the European Court and, secondly, it would probably not be effective because the Japanese would just export into other countries of the Community and the goods would then have the right to come over here. That is why we have to try to get the rest of the Community with us. I believe that more and more members of the Community are willing to take action, although we often meet resistance from Germany, Holland and Denmark on these matters.

Q2. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 April 1987.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: When will the Prime Minister start to treat the pensioners of this country as decent, dignified human beings? When will she stop her cold, inhuman actions, such as ending the death grant this week, defeating free TV licences and ending heating allowances? Why will she not immediately restore the link with earnings as per the last Labour Government, which would make single pensioners almost £8 a week better off and married couples over £12 a week better off? When will she stop this nonsense of saying that pensioners are better off than ever before, when it is just not true? Why will she not treat our pensioners as princes of Europe and not as the paupers of Europe?

The Prime Minister: Our record on looking after the elderly is second to none. Spending on the elderly is the third highest in Europe as a proportion of national income. Denmark and France are above the United Kingdom. We are better than Italy, the Netherlands and Germany. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman refers to the previous regime. I would remind him that in 1979 this Government made good an uprating deficiency against earnings created by the Labour Government in 1978 and gave full price protection to pensioners. Thirdly,—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked a long question. I shall continue to give the answer.

Thirdly, with regard to the payments for pensions and the numbers, there are 1 million more pensioners now than in 1979 and they have received the full amount. The

payments for pensions are made by the working population in this country. If the Opposition's proposals were followed there would be substantial increases in the working population's national insurance contributions. That is what the Labour Opposition are complaining about.

Q3. **Mr. Holt** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Holt: During the remainder of the day will my right hon. Friend find time to talk to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and draw his attention to the front page of the Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette* yesterday, which showed that we now have record steel output in Teesside and that the workers in that industry will be receiving record bonus payments this week? Is that not in complete contrast to the report of gloom and doom by the Northern Region Councils Association? That association does not know what is really happening in the north of England.

The Prime Minister: May we congratulate the Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette* on providing that excellent news. May we congratulate even more the workers in the British Steel Corporation, all of whom have achieved that excellent result. They have turned round a loss in 1979 to a considerable profit of £76 million in the British Steel Corporation as a whole. Last year the corporation is likely to have made a profit of £170 million. Most workers like to work for profitable industries and that means that they like to work under a Conservative Government.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the Business for the week after the Easter Adjournment?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The Business for the first week after the Easter Adjournment will be as follows:

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL—Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

THURSDAY 23 APRIL—Debate on Agriculture and the 1987 farm price proposals on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. Details of the relevant EC documents will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 24 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

[Debate on Thursday 23 April

Relevant European documents:

(a) 4844/87, ADD 1 + COR 2 ADD 2 ADD 3 + COR 1	*CAP Price Proposals 1987-88*
(b) 4224/87	*Situation in the Agricultural Markets 1986*
(c) 4446/87	*Milk Sector Reforms*
(d) 4236/87	*Disposal of Intervention Butter*
(e) 5046/87	*Disposal of Intervention Butter*
(f) 4537/87	*Intervention arrangements for butter and skimmed milk powder*
(g) Unnumbered	*National Aid: French Milk Producers*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee:

(a) HC 22-xiv (1986-87), para. 1 & HC 276-i (1986-87) & HC 22-xvii (1986-87), para 1
(b) HC 22-xiv (1986-87), para 1 & HC 276-i (1986-87)
(c) HC 22-ix ((1986-87), para 3
(d) HC 22-x (1986-87), para 2 & HC 22-xiv (1986-87), para 2
(e) HC 22-xiv (1986-87), para 2
(f) HC 22-x (1986-87), para 3
(g) HC 22-xiii (1986-87), para 4]

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Does he recognise the importance of having a debate on the failure of Government policy on research and development, a matter which has increasing and urgent importance because of the need for Britain to participate properly in European science and technology initiatives? This matter is giving deep concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House, as the Leader of the House can see from early-day motion 722 signed by several hon. Members. Will he now agree to ensure that a debate takes place in Government time as soon as possible after the Easter recess?

[That this House acknowledges the difficulties and underfunding of science evidenced by reports from the Select Committee on Science and Technology (Civil Research and Development), from the University of Sussex (International Comparison of Government Funding), from the Royal Society (Evaluation of National Performance in Basic Research); recognises the need for adequate provision for science and technology to advance industrial recovery, wealth creation and higher living standards in the United Kingdom; notes the imbalance in Government funds allocated to civil and defence research development and relative to France, the Federal Republic and Japan the poor contribution in this regard by a number of firms in the private sector; urges the Government to: (i) maintain a better balance between the general expenditure of the state and the creation of wealth creating assets, (ii) stimulate the private sector by granting further fiscal incentives and by requiring the publication of research and development expenditure in company accounts, (iii) make greater use of commissioned research by Government departments, (iv) foster Alvey-type programmes in exploitable areas of science outside information technology and (v) make additional funds available to the Advisory Board on Research Councils for allocation to research councils, and to the University Grants Committee sufficient to meet the requirements of a competitive industrial state.]

Is the Leader of the House aware that there is a pressing need also for a debate on the important issue of launch aid for the A330 and A340 airbus? Even more, is he aware of the need to persuade his right hon. Friend to give the appropriate aid to enable British Aerospace to participate in that vital project? Such action would have my wholehearted support and the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Even before we rise for the Easter recess, I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman could facilitate the giving of good news were there any to give.

I asked the right hon. Gentleman six weeks ago for a debate in Government time on the privatisation of Rolls-Royce. Since a report in the *Financial Times* this morning shows that the Government are not only trying to sell off Rolls-Royce for a song but are retreating from their objective of widening share ownership, does not the right hon. Gentleman think that a debate directly after the Easter recess would be most timely and of great intrest to hon. Members on both sides of the House?

As the journey to Japan made by the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Minister responsible for corporate and consumer affairs, has proved to be so pointless, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that on the first day that we return after the Easter recess the Minister will come to the House to make a full statement on his trip and the action that the Government now propose to take on the variety of matters that are of concern?

Will the Leader of the House ensure that there is an early debate on the order on teachers' pay and conditions so that, once again, the House can register its objection to the impositions by the Secretary of State for Education and Science on teachers' negotiating rights?

In the light of reports this morning of the Prime Minister's intervention in the appointment to the bishopric of Birmingham, and although I wish the new Bishop of Birmingham every success in his new post, will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister to make a much more full and frank statement than she made this afternoon about the conditions and the criteria that she employed in making such an intervention?

Mr. Biffen: Of course I recognise that in all quarters of the House there is great interest in our national research and development programme performance. To some extent, that can be related to our tax structure; and, therefore, the Second Reading of the Finance Bill will enable some points to be raised. But I understand that the right hon. Gentleman refers to the matter in a wider context. Perhaps we can consider it through the usual channels.

I shall, of course, draw the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about launch aid to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. As to the privatisation of Rolls-Royce, again I must object to the description of this promotion as being "sold for a song".

Mr. Kinnock: How does the right hon. Gentleman describe it?

Mr. Biffen: I describe it as a prudent market operation. That is because I have some experience of these affairs and the right hon. Gentleman does not. To maintain these exchanges at the highest level, I must point out that Rolls-Royce will be debated tomorrow on the Adjournment debate initiated by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). Perhaps we will take the matter further in the light of what is revealed.

I recognise that there is an interest, which goes far beyond that of the Leader of the Opposition, that our trade relations with Japan should be reported to the House after the recess. I shall ensure that these matters are further considered through the usual channels. Likewise, I notice the interest in a debate on the order relating to teachers' pay and conditions.

I must say that it adds a handy embellishment to this pre-election time to note that hon. Members want the appointment of bishops to be further considered by the House. I shall look into the matter which has been raised by the right hon. Gentleman and ascertain the most wise, prudent and conventional methods of taking it further forward.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): On Thursday 23 April, when we discuss agriculture on an Adjournment motion, will it be in order to discuss also the recent proposals by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on alternative land use and the rural economy?

Mr. Biffen: My reply must be prefaced by saying that these matters turn upon the view of the Chair. But my hon. Friend has raised a pertinent point. In truth, in the countryside, agriculture and all other activities are intimately interlocked. It seems to me that, on a motion as wide as the Adjournment such a discussion could take place.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): In view of the important meeting of European Community Ministers on the subject of trade with Japan, which will take place over the weekend and to which the Prime Minister referred, will the Leader of the House arrange for either a statement or a debate shortly after Easter on this important topic? Does he accept that some of us do not believe that this issue has suddenly arisen because of the Cable and Wireless interest but that it has been of concern for some time and has been contributing to the erosion of our manufacturing base? Will the right hon. Gentleman please arrange for this matter to be dealt with fully in the House after Easter?

I should like to support a point made by the Leader of the Opposition on the appointment of bishops. The Prime Minister prayed in aid the support of other party leaders for the present arrangements. Therefore, will the right hon. Gentleman convey to her that other party leaders are not satisfied with the way in which these arrangements are working out?

Mr. Biffen: I am interested to note the right hon. Gentleman's approach to adversarial public affairs, importing a degree of acerbity into the subject of bishops which hitherto I thought was tolerably absent.

Mr. Steel: I am a Presbyterian.

Mr. Biffen: I reaslise that the right hon. Gentleman is a Presbyterian. No doubt he believes that often the spectator sees most of the game.

The right hon. Gentleman's point about relationships with Japan were expressed also by the Leader of the Opposition. I believe that those concerns are felt widely throughout the House. I shall ensure that those views are taken into account.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As, thanks to the Labour party and due to the indolence and incompetence and possibly even the connivance of the Leader of the Opposition, this House after the next election will probably be faced with political apartheid, the constitutional canker of a caucus of black Members of Parliament who are dedicated to the interests not of their constituents or the nation but of a group of people purely on their racial basis, could my right hon. Friend tell the House what constitutional preparation he is making for this abomination?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has touched on a serious matter. Many of us are in no sense sympathetic to the Labour party but nevertheless recognise and applaud the judgment of the Leader of the Opposition that black sections imply possibly the unacceptable face of ethnic politics. As for what will happen in this House, it must depend on the outcome of the general election, which is as yet not certain. On the whole, the problem in the form of the number of Labour Members of Parliament in this House must be less of a difficulty than would otherwise be the case.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Leader of the House aware that it would be quite monstrous for the privatisation of Rolls-Royce to go ahead without a full debate in this House? It is no good saying that it can be raised on the Adjournment or in Opposition time. This is a Government decision and ought to be fully debated in Government time. There is widespread opposition and concern among the workers of Rolls-Royce about privatisation, including those in my own constituency. We must have a debate on this matter before the final prospectus is launched later this month, as we understand the position.

Mr. Biffen: I do not share the right hon. Gentleman's view about the attitudes of employees of Rolls-Royce to this particular matter.

Mr. Millan: They happen to be my constituents, not yours; you know nothing about it. That is a patronising reply.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Leader of the House.

Mr. Biffen: The attitude of the right hon. Gentleman belies his reputation for fairness in this House and his belief that it is possible to have two views upon the attitude of working people in this country towards the ownership of industry. I did reply to the Leader of the Opposition on this point, and I do not think I can go further in response

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to the right hon. Gentleman now, but I will see that his views are made known to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): When he is arranging the business of the House, will the Leader of the House seek an early statement from the Secretary of State for Defence over an incident that affected my constituency last evening, when a Royal Air Force plane dropped a missile—happily a dummy—which landed within 30 ft of two of my constituents. I also ask that a statement should be made regarding the over-flying of areas of population rather than under-populated parts of the country. In particular, I ask that care is taken when equipment is being used so that it does not accidentally descend on the lands of North Devon.

An Hon. Member: Or anywhere else.

Mr. Biffen: I will most certainly see that my right hon. Friend is acquainted with the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller).

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): As the House will not want to spend all its time debating cheap party political points, as suggested by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), I ask the Leader of the House whether he is aware that most born deaf and profoundly deaf children have an education that is so bad that by the time they leave school they have on average a reading age of only eight or eight and a half. That is appalling. We need a change of policy so that those children can learn sign language or oral language, whichever suits the child best. I ask the Leader of the House to look at early-day motion 857 and to arrange time for a debate.

[That this House believes that all born deaf and profoundly deaf children have the right to learn sign language which enables them to acquire a vocabulary; deplores the denial of this right in many schools for the deaf in Britain; notes that current oral educational methods give deaf children a vocabulary and reading ability far below those of hearing children; and calls upon the Government to include signing as part of the training of teachers of the deaf, and to ensure that deaf children are permitted to use all methods of communication, including signing, which will facilitate their education.]

Mr. Biffen: I have indeed acquainted myself with the early-day motion to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred. I cannot offer the prospect of a debate in Government time in the near future, but I will certainly see that it is drawn to the attention of the relevant Government department.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): May I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to early-day motion 864 which deals with the Norcross takeover bid?

[That this House is of the opinion that the William Holdings bid to take control of Norcross plc is not in the best interests of the country, the work-force or the shareholders.] Will he ask his right hon. Friend to refer this takeover bid to the Director of Fair Trading because it is relevant to my constituency? That is as good a reason as any other for it going to the Director of Fair Trading. Moreover, the bid by William Holdings for Norcross is nothing but throwing paper money to get real money to destroy the limbs of part of the industry; the sale will make more money for bids elsewhere, with paper money. In other words, this is what British industry has been suffering in the last few years. It is time it stopped. This should be the beginning of the stopping of it.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend made that very clear. He will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to comment upon the merits of the case, but I assure him that, in conformity with normal practice, the matter has gone to the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): May I support the plea of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and that of the leader of the Liberal party for an early and urgent debate on our trading relationship with the Government of Japan? This is not a party issue in the strict terms of the phrase. There are hon. Members on this side and on the Government side who are frustrated and angry about the whole business. We should like to have a debate so that those of us who represent manufacturers of electrical appliances and such things may have an opportunity to tell the Treasury Bench what we think about the whole business and through the Treasury Bench to express our deep anger with the Japanese Government.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman says. I certainly accept his proposition that there is deep disquiet about Japanese trading practices which unites Members from all parts of the House. I shall certainly see that his voice is added to those which are referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the public refusal this week of the French and German Governments to deny a safe haven to any financial institutions expelled from London by the Government, and the consequent danger that the result of action would simply be to transfer valuable resources and employment from London to Paris or Frankfurt, can the Leader of the House give us all a firm assurance that before any specific steps are taken there will be a debate in the House? Could he also find time in that week for a debate on our trade with West Germany, where our deficit in trade is more than twice our deficit with Japan and where the non-trade barriers are in some respects more blatant and more cruel to British industry and jobs?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend highlights one aspect of the problems of trade with Japan which will necessarily cause reflection and debate in the House. I shall see that his request for a debate is coupled with his observation. As to his comments about trade with the Federal Republic of Germany, at the moment I would prefer our energies to be concentrated on the prospect of a debate on Japan.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Has the right hon. Gentleman's attention been drawn to early-day motion 877 on the Prime Minister's statements on nurses' pay?

[That this House notes that on Thursday 2nd April, Official Report, column 1220, the Prime Minister said: 'Nurses' pay has increased by 23 per cent. over and above inflation since the Government came into office'; whilst on Tuesday 7th April, Official Report, column 158, she said

'Nurses' pay . . . was one third, 33 per cent., higher in real terms, in 1986 than in 1979'; and calls on the Prime Minister to indicate which of her statements is accurate.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that on 2 April she claimed that nurses had had a 23 per cent. increase in real terms since 1979 but by 7 April, five days later, that 23 per cent. had gone up to 33 per cent? Can he tell me on which day the Prime Minister was telling the truth?

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early debate on the allocation of British Gas shares, because evidence is coming forward that the same hon. Members who engaged in malpractices in the purchase of British Telecom shares were in the same business on British Gas shares? It is very important that we get at the truth.

Mr. Biffen: On the first point, I am not in a position to adjudicate with confidence on the figures to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. *[Interruption.]* No, it is all right; I have to help the hon. Gentleman. I think that the figure of 23 per cent. would be reliable and would demonstrate the clear performance of nurses' pay under this Government. On the second point, which I have no doubt was raised in anxious good faith, I understand that the whole question is subject to investigation by the auditors Touche Ross. Those investigations are continuing and I think it would be wise to wait until they are completed.

Mr. Hamilton: Read the *Daily Mirror*.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): As to nurses' pay, to which the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) just referred, is the Leader of the House aware that some hon. Members would welcome an early debate on nurses' pay so that the promises of past and present Governments and the promises of political parties could be well and truly evaluated? At the same time, attention may be drawn to the worrying fact that the number of agency nurses in the National Health Service has been rising, in the opinion of some hon. Members, to an unhealthy level. We would also be able to express the hopes of some Conservative Members that, whenever the recommendations on pay and conditions for nurses are received, early attention and favourable treatment will be given to them.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a persuasive contribution from the speech that he will surely make when the debate eventually takes place. However, there is no prospect of an early debate on nurses' pay in the period shortly after Easter.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): With regard to the appointment of bishops, does the right hon. Gentleman think that something might be said for what might be called a "balanced ticket"—a good sound Christian to go along with every reliable Tory appointment?

Mr. Biffen: It is characteristic of the right hon. Gentleman that that is one of the more thoughtful contributions that have been made this afternoon.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is cross-party support for the urgent and important decision on launch aid for the A330 and A340 airbus? It is important because of the effect that it will have on the British aerospace industry throughout the length and breadth of the country and the jobs that depend on it. It is urgent because, if we are to continue to compete in the world market, and maintain our technological lead in the face of the American threat, we must have a quick decision. Will he convey our worries to the Prime Minister and, if necessary, arrange a debate to build on the success of the A320 airbus and ensure that we have this launch aid as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend puts a succinct and compelling case for launch aid for the airbus. I shall ensure that those views are conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Will the Leader of the House tell his Cabinet friends and colleagues that when he comes to the House in a fortnight it will not expect him to be the fall guy for the Cabinet? Will he ensure that he can say what the decision will be about the airbus, because it is crucial for the future of the aerospace industry? It is vital that we have a debate on that subject. The right hon. Gentleman must be able to give an answer, as he must be able to with regard to Rolls-Royce. I can assure him that the workers at the Barnoldswick factory in Lancashire, who recall what happened when it was privatised in the past, are fearful of what the Government proposals mean.

Mr. Biffen: Everybody who has held this position has been a fall guy; some have fallen more heavily than others. I take to heart the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, and I shall ensure that my right hon. Friends who have responsibilities in that sector are informed.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Will my right hon. Friend find time soon after the Easter recess for a full debate on public transport needs for London and the south-east, in which we could pay tribute to the achievement of British Rail and especially Network SouthEast which, as my right hon. Friend may know, has increased its passengers mileage by about 2 million over the past few years, while at the same time it has absorbed, through efficiency, a cut in the public service obligation grant of some 35 per cent.

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to endorse the tribute that my hon. Friend pays to British Rail. I am sure that he will appreciate that Government time is at a premium after the Easter recess because of the number of days on the Floor of the House that must be taken by sections of the Finance Bill. I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend says and refer his comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to read the news item today on the front page of *The Times* under the heading

"New plan for water meters"?

It is by Philip Webster, the chief political correspondent, who has had the privilege of being informed by senior Government sources that the Government have decided to move towards compulsory water metering. As water metering has serious implications for the poor, the elderly and the unemployed and as neither you, Mr. Speaker, nor hon. Members like to hear that newspapers have been briefed before right hon. and hon. Members, will the Leader of the House ensure that right hon. and hon. Members are given a statement on this matter by the Secretary of State for the Environment as soon as Parliament reconvenes after Easter?

Mr. Biffen: I have not seen the article, but I broadly understand its content. I understand that it refers to

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legislation for the next Parliament. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman shares with me a profound confidence that it will be a Conservative Government in that Parliament.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I support the calls from various quarters of the House for a debate on the appointment of bishops so that one may support the appointment of the excellent Bishop of Kensington to the see of Birmingham, which has been a see only since 1901 and has had many famous incumbents? I particularly want to support the appointment of people such as the Bishop of Kensington, who put theology and pastoral care before politics.

Mr. Biffen: I warmly applaud the broad sentiments of my hon. Friend and I am certain that if eventually this subject becomes of such burning concern to the House that we do have a debate upon the Floor, he will have a chance to make those very points.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Leader of the House table a motion to enable us to debate racism on the part of Liberal councillors in Hackney and Tower Hamlets and thereby enable the leader of the Liberal party to tell us whether it is his historic role to lead a racist Liberal party into the next general election?

Mr. Biffen: I am not entirely aware of the situation or of the serious allegations that are now being made. I have to say, with great regret, that I cannot foresee the likelihood of Government time for such a debate, but I am sure that, if the alliance parties have time at their disposal, that will be one of the first subjects that they would wish to have debated so that the matter can be made fully explicit.

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the considerable concern that has been generated by the decision of the University Grants Committee and the court of the London university to reduce the grant to Birkbeck college by some 7 per cent. and to give an indication that even further cuts will be made in the future? Will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to come to the House as soon as possible and, I hope, make a statement saying that the Government are taking action to safeguard the future of Birkbeck college and the considerable contribution that it makes to continuing education in our capital city.

Mr. Biffen: I understand my right hon. Friend's concern at the continuing good health of Birkbeck college and I shall most certainly see that his remarks are drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): When the right hon. Gentleman is discussing launch aid for the airbus with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will he also draw their attention to early-day motion 558, which has been signed by 92 Members on both sides of the House? That shows the depth of feeling, because a failure to give launch aid for the airbus could mean the death of the airframe industry in this country and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not want to see that.

[That this House, noting the considerable investment made by British Aerospace plc in future projects and the substantial orders and commitments already achieved for the A320, urges the Government to make an early and positive decision about the company's application for launch aid for future funding of the A330/A340 Airbus project, thus securing jobs in United Kingdom high technology industries, and enabling the United Kingdom to continue in this increasingly successful international collaborative programme.]

As he has seen fit to discuss the views of Rolls-Royce workers, and as I think I have a greater knowledge of trade unions than the right hon. Gentleman, may I tell him that the trade unions are totally opposed to it because we are concerned about the security of the Rolls-Royce workers. We have already seen it go bankrupt under private enterprise in 1971 and we do not want to see a repetition of that.

Mr. Biffen: Before I get written off as a total rural turnip on these matters, I have to point out that my constituency of Shropshire, North lies between Shrewsbury and Crewe, which both have Rolls-Royce traditions. Rolls-Royce is still an evident factor in Crewe, but I agree that it is a different story in Shrewsbury. As to the hon. Gentleman's point about early-day motion 558, I shall most certainly see that that is referred to my right hon. Friends.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I, instead of repeating my hitherto vain pleas to my right hon. Friend to get our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to give the House a statement on British space policy, urge him to allow the House an opportunity to debate space policy as a whole? Our European counterparts—France, Germany and Italy—have expanding space programmes and contribute more fully to the important work of the European Space Agency.

Mr. Biffen: Of course I bear with my hon. Friend, because he makes persuasive requests, week after week, to allow the House to debate space policy. I shall bear in mind what he says. However, I must tell him—as I have said to others—that when we return after the Easter recess a great deal of the time of the House will be devoted to the Finance Bill and I would cruelly mislead him if I gave him to think that time was easily available for other matters.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): Will the Leader of the House take it from me that there has never before been a time when hon. Members on both sides of the House who are interested in aviation have seen the American civil aviation industry so worried? It is worried because it sees a real threat from the A320, and a positive approaching threat from the A330 and A340. Should we not avoid losing our lead, and make adequate and speedy provision for the building of those aircraft with a British input?

Mr. Biffen: Of course I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. I am sure that his voice will be recorded with those of many other hon. Members who are requesting a statement or debate about launch aid.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Has my right hon. Friend received the reports from the European Legislation Committee, both on the proposed settlement of the agricultural prices for the coming year and on the

budget? When is he considering making time available for a debate on those important issues, which affect the future of the whole Community? Will he make time available — exceptionally — for an almost unique debate on an overseas matter — international indebtedness and the problems that that can cause, both for the developed and the under-developed world?

My right hon. Friend may know that two reports by the all-party committee on overseas development and by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee are coming to the House. Will he bear that in mind in planning his schedule?

Mr. Biffen: On the first point, of course I shall immediately look into the specific matters that my hon. Friend has raised, and I shall be in touch with him.

On the second point, there will shortly be a report from the departmental Select Committee on Third-world issues, including the vital one of debt repayment. It would then be appropriate to await the Government's response and, thereafter, to decide what would be the most appropriate way for the House to proceed.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we shortly have a debate on the desperate shortage of resources for the Health Service in the country in general, and in Leicestershire in particular? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that an all-party delegation of hon. Members representing constituencies in Leicestershire called on the Minister for Health this afternoon to express our shared concern at the impossibility of Leicestershire health authority coping within its cash limits? Is he aware of the problems of likely closures of hospitals and maternity units, and of the desperate difficulties facing psychiatric and geriatric units? As this is a matter of concern to both sides of the House, may we have a debate on it and some hope of action, as the Minister said that he could offer no hope of further central Government funds?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that this matter was raised fairly extensively in a recess Adjournment debate. I have nothing more to add to what I said then. I take note of the hon. and learned Gentleman's observations, and I shall see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is made aware of them. In the meantime, the hon. and learned Gentleman's most likely way to have the matter debated in the House would be to try to raise the issue on the Adjournment debate, rather than to anticipate Government time being made available.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I associate myself with the deputation that was concerned about health provision in Leicestershire, but, exceptionally, I wish to take my right hon. Friend away from Leicestershire today to call for a debate on the apppointment of bishops and, particularly, on the activities of the Crown Appointments Commission. Those activities seem to be misunderstood by hon. Members on both sides of the House. As my right hon. Friend is aware, the Crown Appointments Commission draws up a list of two names in such a way as to provide what the former leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) might call a balanced ticket. Those two names are presented to the Prime Minister, from which she must choose one.

In such a debate, I should like a discussion of the widening of the trawl for the candidates that are proposed, so that other, far better candidates can be admitted for appointment to bishoprics. I am not declaring an interest, but I should say that there is a growing tendency for those hon. Members who are on the Synod to be lobbied by the former Bishop of Birmingham to appoint James Thompson as the next Bishop of Birmingham, a request to which I, naturally, did not agree.

Mr. Biffen: The fact that my hon. Friend delicately passes Leicestershire by is a sign that he believes that his seat is becoming safer by the week. As for my hon. Friend's second point, he has done the House a courtesy by explaining the current position. I hope that the House will take this matter with great seriousness. There is no doubt that one of the effective requirements for the continued health and virility of the Church of England is that the episcopacy represent all the traditions that are contained in the Church. Whether we can contribute much to that end is a matter about which I have some reservations, but we are entitled to travel hopefully.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I wonder whether the Leader of the House will reconsider what he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) in respect of the multiple share applications, debate or statement, after he has read the *Daily Mirror* tomorrow, which, according to all reports, has done a trawl of British Gas? It seems that there will be further revelations about multiple applications from Tory MPs.

On the subject of greed and materialism, will the Leader of the House also consider having a word with the Liberals to see whether the burdens of high office are beginning to get them down? He has heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) about the problems of Tower Hamlets—the cutting of the education grant, throwing families into the gutter and all the rest of it. Now, according to my latest information, the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes), having scurried along the streets canvassing for votes and promising jobs for all her constituents — thousands of them are out of work—has, within a few weeks got herself another job — a directorship of Thornton Drummond and Brett. Will the right hon. Gentleman inquire whether this multiple job application is worth £5,000, £10,000, or what? It sheds a rather curious light upon those alliance MPs.

Mr. Biffen: If I could take the hon. Gentleman's second point first: looking across at him, sometimes one could forgive him for being a Socialist, when he has his back to the light. Then one realised that he was the hon. Member who co-existed cheerfully enough with the parliamentary Liberal party under the premiership of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). I think that, if I were an elector in Bolsover, I should want a guarantee that such a metamorphosis was not possibly in prospect again.

I think that the hon. Gentleman's point is perfectly valid. We need a few weeks for some pretty good uninhibited examination of the record, so that the book is known, the crystal examined and the future divined. On the hon. Gentleman's previous point, he is inviting me to set aside the professional work of Touche Ross in favour of the journalistic achievements of the *Daily Mirror*. That is an interesting proposition, but I say to him that the day will come—inevitably—when he will be on the Front

[Mr. Biffen]

Bench and will have to accept responsibility *[Interruption.]* He will then decide at the end of the day that Touche Ross is probably the safest haven.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my right hon. Friend consider finding time for a debate after Easter on the independent sector of the education system? Does he agree that such a debate is urgent in view of the alliance plans which were announced yesterday, which, if implemented, would threaten the charitable status of independent schools? The parents who send their children to the sort of schools that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) attended would continue to do so, but those who send their children to less fashionable private schools would probably no longer be able to do so. That is something that we should consider.

Mr. Biffen: It most certainly is. When I hear observations of that sort, and when I think of the days that will be spent on the Floor of the House discussing the Finance Bill, my heart is heavy. I urge my hon. Friend not to give up. What he cannot say here, he can say on the hustings.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I am sure that the Leader of the House is aware of early-day motion 85 which sets out opposition to the privatisation of Rolls-Royce and which has received the support of 137 Labour Members but no support from Alliance Members.

[That this House condemns the Government's intention to privatise Rolls-Royce and would utterly refute the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement's recent statement that Rolls-Royce employees 'relish the idea of privatisation'; fully agrees, on the contrary, with the concern of most employees that their jobs, wages and working conditions would be at risk; reminds the Government that it was a previous Conservative administration which originally brought the company into state ownership, in order to prevent it from going out of business; commends the dedication and skills of the workforce, which has been responsible for revitalising the company since 1971; contends that private ownership is totally unsuitable for an industry which requires large amounts of advance investment for product research and development; re-affirms its belief that the future for Rolls-Royce and the workforce is best guaranteed by it remaining fully in the public sector and not subject to short-term yearly profit analyses; and looks forward to a Labour Government that is prepared to safeguard jobs by investing in manufacturing industry.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Adjournment debate that I have secured tomorrow at 1.30 pm on the future of Rolls-Royce will be the only parliamentary scrutiny of one of the largest privatisation exercises of this Parliament? Will he reconsider the answer that he gave my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and others? Why are the Government so embarrassed to have a debate on Rolls-Royce? Is it the sweetener of £645 million of debt cancellation to bribe the way for that sale in the market place? Are the Government embarrassed because of the problems with the superfan and the rejection by Airbus this week of the engine for future aircraft? Why is the Department of Trade and Industry so afraid to come to the Chamber to listen to the voice of the workers' opposition to privatisation? If the right hon. Gentleman wants the figures from Parkside in Coventry, over 80 per cent. of the work force have sent their names and addresses to the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement opposing the sale of Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. He will have an opportunity tomorrow to make a real contribution to the public debate about Rolls-Royce. I can say no more than what I said to the Leader of the Opposition — that we shall consider the matter in the light of the discussions that take place.

Mr. David Sumburg (Bury, South): In the light of the local elections on 7 May, which is one election date that the leader of the Social Democratic party is capable of forecasting accurately, should not the House have an opportunity to debate Labour's appalling record in local government? In my constituency, after one year of Labour rule, the rates are to rise by 17 per cent. — *[Interruption.]* Is not this the true price of voting for the Labour party, and should we not have a debate on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: In the absence of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), the leader of the Social Democratic party, I thank my hon. Friend for the generosity of his observations. Although the matters that my hon. Friend has raised are properly directed to me, I would deceive him if I were to say that there was any prospect of Government time being made available to enable them to be debated before the date of the local authority elections.

I return to the point that I made in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). Such debates are not restricted to the Chamber, and we are now approaching that period in our national affairs when there is a lively and growing concern that they should take place outside the House as well as in it.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 874, which is concerned with the business activities of a Conservative party fund raiser, Mr. Alan Lewis?

[That this House urges the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Right honourable Member for Chingford, to make urgent inquiries within the Duchy to ascertain whether residents there, as elsewhere in Britain, have received letters from Alan Lewis, chairman and managing director of the Hartley Investment Trust, appealing for funds on behalf of the Conservative party; urges him to write to the recipients of such letters explaining that Mr. Lewis transferred shares worth over £22 million in the textile group, Illingworth Morris, of which he is chairman and managing director, to Walbrook Investments, registered in the Netherlands Antilles, a Dutch Caribbean colony, and that he further understands that Walbrook Investments is wholly owned by Wickhams Cay Trust, registered in the British Virgin Islands, and that Wickhams Cay Trust is the trustee of the Alan J. Lewis Settlement, a trust set up by Mr. Lewis, the sole life tenant of trust; that he believes the shares were held by four subsidiaries of the Hartley Investment Trust, owned by Mr. Lewis and on whose notepaper Mr. Lewis wrote appealing for funds on behalf of the Conservative Party; that he understands the Antilles arrangement allows Mr. Lewis to control the company but will greatly reduce the amount of tax paid on dividends on shares which Mr. Lewis formerly owned directly; and urges the Chancellor of the

Duchy to warn recipients of letters from Mr. Lewis within the Duchy and elsewhere that patriotic people of common sense would be unwise to contribute to any appeal conducted by Mr. Lewis on behalf of the Conservative Party.]

Some might argue that the salting away of £22 million-worth of shares in a Caribbean tax haven qualifies Mr. Lewis admirably as a Conservative party fund raiser, but will the right hon. Gentleman have urgent words with the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to persuade him to do what he has so far not done following a letter that I sent to him on 28 March, in which I asked him to dissociate the Conservative party from the financial appeal that is being conducted by Mr. Alan Lewis?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman, with unerring accuracy, has observed that I have no responsibilities for the activities of Conservative Central Office. I am sure that if there were found to be any malpractices, they would be referred to the appropriate authorities. I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's observations are drawn to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will my right hon. Friend support the Leader of the Opposition's plea for an early debate on the EEC research and development initiative? That is not because we are for it; we are against it. Most of my right hon. and hon. Friends are in favour of competition. We believe that competition is the spur to research and development and not EEC bureaucrats running an R and D programme. What would have happened to our laser technology if GEC and Ferranti had pooled their research and development departments?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes it clear that such a debate would be lively and certainly two-sided. I fear that I cannot say that that necessarily makes it any more likely that Government time can be made available for it in the near future. I have prayed in aid already the fact that the consideration of the Finance Bill will make considerable demands upon the time that is available for debates on the Floor of the House. My hon. Friend has made a fair point and I hope that the occasion will arise eventually when it can be deployed more fully.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 758, which calls for time for Members to be able to debate and vote upon the principle of anti-discrimination legislation for the disabled?

[That this House recognises that disabled people suffer unjustified discrimination in many areas of their lives; notes that there have been four attempts in the past years to place on the Statute Book a measure which would outlaw this practice; further notes that members of the House of Lords have already been given an opportunity to express themselves on this issue; and calls for time to be found in order that right hon. and hon. Members of this House can vote on the principle of anti-discrimination legislation.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it was one of the demands made by the massive lobby in Westminster Hall yesterday? Will he try to redeem the Conservative party from the disgraceful attitude that it displayed on 18 November 1983, when I tried previously to introduce such legislation? The right hon. Gentleman could redeem his party by providing Government time to debate such a measure during this Session.

Mr. Biffen: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising the matter. I think that he will find that the disabled were debated reasonably recently, in mid-February. I observe that the hon. Gentleman would like a further debate, but I must tell him, as I have told many others, that there is no time available—certainly not Government time—in the near future to enable such a debate to take place.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Has my right hon. Friend considered the possibility of having a debate on the arrangements that may arise in the Parliament following the next general election? I have in mind the possibility of multitudes of parties and organisations within the parties in this place, which perhaps have heretofore been unforeseen. Will my right hon. Friend take into account the possibility of parties based on racial or ethnic grounds, or on any other grounds? Has he given any thought to seating arrangements in the Chamber, the use of Committee rooms, voting procedures and various other matters that may affect political parties on the Opposition Benches, especially in the light of recent events in Birmingham, which should concentrate our minds, including the mind of my right hon. Friend, on the arrangements that may have to be made after the next general election?

Mr. Biffen: Apart from thinking that the precondition outlined by my hon. Friend will presage a substantial Government majority following the next general election, everything else fills me with foreboding. The more we have factions, the more we have groups within groups—the Labour party could tell us much about that—the more we shall find that the anguished life of the usual channels will become torn worse than ever. That is something that I would not wish on anyone.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, East): In view of the terse account of the events leading to the passing of the Disabled Persons' Rights Act 1986 that was given by the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled, in the "Today" studio yesterday, when he was conveniently beyond challenge, does the Leader of the House agree that in fairness we should have a full debate on these matters so that we can examine closely and precisely what was said during the passage of the Act? Perhaps more importantly, will the right hon. Gentleman respond to the excellent lobby yesterday and the eloquent description of it by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) by agreeing that we should have a specific debate on the implementation of the Disabled Persons' Rights Act?

Mr. Biffen: I happened to hear the contribution made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled in the "Today" programme to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I can understand why he feels vexed about it. In my view, my hon. Friend made a most impressive contribution to the debate. I fully understand those who would wish to see the debate carried forward in the Chamber in the near future. It is a request that I shall bear in mind, but given the responsibilities that oblige me to make provision for the Finance Bill, there is no prospect of such a debate early on in Government time.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): When the Leader of the House reports to the Prime Minister on the exchanges concerning the appointment of bishops, will

[Mr. Peter Shore]

he assure her that there is a very strong view that Birmingham's loss is Stepney's gain—particularly at a time when strong moral leadership is needed to denounce the un-Christian, wretched and discriminatory policies imposed on helpless people who are homeless, and who are now to be evicted by the Liberal council in the borough?

Mr. Biffen: It was a very neat piece of elastic work to embrace so many concepts within one contribution. The right hon. Gentleman's remarks deserve consideration on that account alone, and they will of course be referred to the Prime Minister.

Helicopter Orders

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the future defence requirement for support helicopters and the orders that I intend to place with Westland plc.

The services possess a number of different types of helicopter capable of transporting troops and undertaking logistic and other tasks: Chinooks, Puma, Sea King, Wessex and Lynx. A key task is to support our Army in Germany, for which—in addition to Lynx of the Army Air Corps — Chinook and Puma helicopters are currently assigned. There is also a wide range of other deployments worldwide.

Until 1985, it was envisaged that both RAF Puma and Wessex support helicopters would be replaced one-for-one by a helicopter of similar size. That approach, however, came increasingly into question as a result of trials conducted by 6 Airmobile Brigade that suggested a requirement for an increased number of larger helicopters. A comprehensive review of the requirement for support helicopters in all roles well into the next century was therefore set in hand.

That work showed the need for additional large helicopters in the central region, capable of lifting a platoon—that is, about 30 men and their equipment—or a substantial logistic load. Those large helicopters, together with some Lynx battlefield helicopters, would enable the Army to provide an airmobile capability and thereby enhance our defence contribution in Germany.

The choice for the large helicopter lies between additional Chinooks, which are already in service in Germany, and the introduction of a utility version of the Anglo-Italian EH101 helicopter, which is due to enter service in the naval version in the early 1990s. The Government have decided that the right choice is to introduce the utility EH101 to meet that requirement. The choice will build on the investment that we have already made in the naval version, and reflects our policy on European helicopter collaboration.

We have at the same time reviewed the case for continued British participation in the NH90 collaborative helicopter project beyond the study phase that was recently completed. NH90 is a smaller helicopter than EH101, and will be available later. With the decision that we have now reached on the future composition of our support helicopter force, we no longer have an early requirement for a helicopter in the NH90 class, nor is there the money to fund both participation in the NH90 definition and development programme—which is due to begin soon — and an early purchase of other helicopters. We are therefore informing our partners that we do not intend to proceed to the next stage of the NH90 project.

In reaching a decision on the choice between alternative support helicopters, and particularly on the timing of orders, I have had much in mind the work load at Westland Helicopters, until work builds up on the naval version of the EH101. Subject to satisfactory resolution of the contractual and other issues with the companies concerned and our Italian partners, we intend to place an order for an initial batch of 25 utility EH101s for delivery in the early 1990s. I also intend—subject to satisfactory

contractual negotiations — to order a further 16 Lynx helicopters for the support of airmobile operations. The cost of the orders — which have a total value well in excess of £300 million — will be contained within the overall public expenditure planning totals. They are in addition to an order already announced for a further seven Sea King helicopters for the Royal Navy, which I hope to place soon, following the completion of contractual negotiations.

Those orders are also in addition to the continuing defence work for Westland in support of the services' existing helicopter fleet; to earlier Sea King and Lynx orders already announced; to the very large and challenging naval EH101 programme, for which we plan an initial order of 50 helicopters; and to the first stage of a new light attack helicopter. The package that I am announcing will sustain a British helicopter industry capable of meeting the demanding requirements of the services into the 1990s and beyond.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The right hon. Gentleman's statement, although extensively trailed, will nevertheless come as a blow both to Britain's armed forces and—perhaps more strongly—to the helicopter business of Westland, and those who work in that business.

Our armed forces now have fewer helicopters than they had 10 years ago—at a time when the Americans and, more important, the Russians, are building up their own military helicopter fleets. The order will not make up for that deficiency, especially in battlefield helicopters on the central front; it will not safeguard the future of Britain's helicopter industry; and it will not preserve jobs in that industry.

First, does not the statement prove that those of us—including the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—who argued that the Sikorsky solution was no solution, and that British participation in the NH90 project would not survive the Sikorsky project, were correct? Was not the Prime Minister wrong about that?

Secondly, is it not the case that, although the French and German partners were informed about the NH90 some time ago, our Italian partners in the EH101 project were not told? If that is so, is it not an insult to our partners in the project?

Thirdly, will the Secretary of State confirm that at least 2,000 direct jobs in Westland, as well as indirect jobs, will be lost, and that one factory is likely to close down in its entirety?

The Secretary of State mentioned contractual arrangements. Can he say when Westland will receive a bankable contract under those arrangements? He also mentioned that more than £300 million would be found within the public expenditure planning totals. Will he explain that? Will the money come out of the existing defence budget totals, and, if so, where will cuts be made to provide it?

Finally, will the Secretary of State tell the House how much of that £300 million will leave the defence budget during this financial year to satisfy all the orders that he announced?

Mr. Younger: I am very surprised at the right hon. Gentleman's response. If, as he says, the announcement will be a blow to the company, will not safeguard industry and is a disaster generally, I cannot imagine what an announcement that no helicopters were being ordered would have meant.

As the right hon. Gentleman can see, this is a very large order, and it will be extremely helpful to the company. The right hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that the company is issuing a statement this afternoon, in which it welcomes my statement.

I assure the right hon. Gentleman that all the partners have been informed at the same time; none were informed before the others. I have written to all of them.

I hope that the contract will be concluded after the appropriate negotiations have taken place. That always takes some time.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke of the relationship with the Sikorsky deal. I assure him that there is no connection of any kind between the ownership arrangements for Westland and the need or otherwise to order the NH90. The simple reason, which I gave in my statement, is that we have no requirement for more helicopters of the size of the NH90, and it would therefore seem somewhat strange to continue with the programme officially when there are many other uses for funds. As for funds, the cost of the orders that I have announced today will come from within the defence budget, except that for the 60 Lynx helicopters there will be an addition to the defence budget to help with the cost. I cannot tell the right hon. Gentleman offhand how much of the cost will fall on this year's budget, but it will not be very much.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Having pressed so very hard and for so very long for these orders, I welcome them, but is it not outrageous that at this very moment Westland is announcing the closure of its factory in Weston-super-Mare? Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that from now on the existing Ministry of Defence fleet of Westland helicopters will have satisfactory spare parts and customer support operations, without the skilled help of my constituents?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome of the announcement, but I absolutely appreciate the extremely sad effect that it must have had on him and his constituents, which I greatly regret. I pass on my sympathy to those concerned for what to them must be a very unhappy announcement. As for the provision of spare parts and customer support operations, I am assured by the company that any restructuring that it carries out will safeguard its ability to service and support all the Westland helicopters that are in service with the forces. These orders will also enable the company as a whole to look to the future, to restructure itself and to be a thoroughly sound and effective company, with what will be a very large order book. I assure my hon. Friend that the difficulties that undoubtedly will follow in some parts of the company, including that part of it which is in his constituency, will be very much in our minds and that if we can help in any way we shall do so.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The Secretary of State will recognise that this will be bitter news for the Westland work force and for the community, who now will have to pay in jobs for the mismanagement of this sad and sorry affair.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Gentleman backed it.

Mr. Ashdown: The Sikorsky deal had absolutely nothing to do with it.

Does the Secretary of State not agree that if the company had been in the hands of the consortium that was

[Mr. Ashdown]

proposed by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) it would have been in an immeasurably worse position than it is in today and that its future viability might have been threatened? The NH90 decision was not taken as a result of Sikorsky but because this Government wished to withdraw from the European consortium. Is it not also the case that the British Army asked for more helicopters than the Secretary of State has provided to fulfil its tactical roles in Europe? Is not this, therefore, a case of the Government's short-term vision damaging the country's long-term perspectives?

Mr. Younger: I cannot agree with all that the hon. Gentleman said. Of course this must be extremely unhappy news for those who may find that they lose their jobs at Westland, but it is very good news for the company as a whole and for those who will continue to work for it. It gives the company a firm base on which to plan for the future. I respectfully suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he ought to bear in mind that he has a large number of constituents whose jobs will be secured by this announcement. They will welcome it.

Of course the hon. Gentleman was absolutely right to say that the question of who owns Westland has nothing to do with going on with the NH90. The careful staff studies we have made show that we do not require more helicopters of that size. If we required them, we would be ordering some. As we do not require them, it does not seem to be reasonable to spend limited defence funds on a product that we do not intend to order. It is not the case that we have been asked for more than has been provided. The services and Westland will be very glad to have a large order for the EH101 utility version, which I hope will be a very successful helicopter for many years to come.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend reiterate for the benefit of Opposition Members that what he has just announced shows that we have laid a firm foundation for the continuation of a prosperous helicopter industry in this country, and will he say a word about the export potential of the types of helicopter that he has mentioned?

Mr. Younger: I am most grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. He is quite correct. This is the type of announcement for which the company has been calling. It has told me continually that it wants to know what helicopters the Ministry of Defence wants so that it can sort out the restructuring of the company. The orders that I have announced for the EH101—the naval and utility version—the Lynx and the Sea King amount to no fewer than 98 helicopters. In addition, 12 helicopters are now under construction. In the face of that, anybody who says that the Government have not done their utmost to give the company a good, secure sign for the future is running the risk of making himself look very foolish indeed.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that despite the long delay and the orders that have now been announced, we shall still be 50 per cent. short? It reminds me a little of 1939, when we had the appropriate aircraft but not enough of them. The right hon. Gentleman ought to bear that in mind. Will he take it from me that unless there is collaboration with Europe we shall lose face? If he cannot proceed with helicopter collaboration, will he urge on his right hon. Friend the need to proceed with the A330 and the A340 venture so that at least some of the face that we have lost in Europe will be restored?

Mr. Younger: The latter point is of course a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, and I am sure that he will have noted what the hon. Gentleman said. As for the provision of helicopters, when these orders are eventually completed there is no doubt that the British services will be extremely well equipped with helicopters. What is more, the helicopters that they will have will be modern and up to date. I hope that in consequence Westland will be able to sell some of them abroad. It ought to be able to do so, with the boost of the British Government having placed orders for them.

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the ending of this long period of uncertainty will be warmly welcomed by the company, by those who work in it, including a number of my constituents, and by the armed services? Is he further aware that the company very badly needs additional orders, despite the fact that his announcement, together with past announcements, means that it is already in receipt of the largest volume of orders that it has ever had in its history? Will he take note of the general feeling that there undoubtedly is in the House that, since the helicopter is a new weapon of war that has been proved both at sea and on land, further attention has to be given to its development, which means further orders in the years to come?

Mr. Younger: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend, whose knowledge of these matters goes back further than that of most right hon. and hon. Members. I am sure he is right to say that, above all, the company will be glad that the uncertainty under which it has been labouring has been removed. The company has a short-term problem, to which reference has been made in some of the recent statements, but there is no doubt that in the long term Westland has a very large order book. I am sure that all those who live in the west country will be extremely glad to know that it will be a major force in Europe's helicopter industry for a long time to come.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that there will be a void when orders run out between 1988 and 1992 and that today's announcement represents only a drop in the ocean? It will not fill the gap. Although it is welcome, the announcement will not save jobs. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House just how many people will lose their jobs and whether the plant at Weston-super-Mare is to close? It is all right for the right hon. Gentleman to say that Sikorsky is not involved, but where are all the orders that it promised to fill the gap? Does it not mean that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was right to propose the European consortium? He resigned over it. As the present Secretary of State has failed to fill the gap, will he also resign and go to the Back Benches?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman's long supplementary was a little contradictory. He is right when he says that there is a short-term gap. Therefore I am glad that to some extent we have been able to fill it with the Lynx order and by bringing forward, as far as we possibly can, the order for the utility EH101s. As for the loss of jobs and

the possible closure of any of the Westland factories, that is very much a matter for the company. It has been asking us to let it know where we stand so that it can work out the correct disposition of its resources. That will be for the company to decide and to announce. It is no part of my responsibility as to whether or not Sikorsky takes further business to Westland, but I am sure that Sikorsky has a genuine interest in the company and will do what it can to help. It is not the case, with respect, that the orders I have announced today can be described as non-European. All of them are European collaborative projects: the EH101 with Italy and the Agusta light attack helicopter, also with Italy. That is very good European collaboration and does not bear any of the construction that the hon. Gentleman placed upon it.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scale of the Government's contribution is indeed welcome in safeguarding this country's only helicopter manufacturer? That welcome is tinged with some regret because, yet again, in the eyes of our European partners, this country is seen as pulling out of a collaborative project. Does my right hon. Friend agree that much of the responsibility for the work force's disappointment and the redundancies rest on the exaggerated expectations that it was led to have by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) when he so enthusiastically endorsed the prospects for the sale of the Black Hawk? Clearly that has not come about. Has Sikorsky put any orders to Westland for the Black Hawk? Have any Black Hawks been sold?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right that the scale of the orders will be helpful to the company — indeed, the company has said so in its statement today. I also agree with my hon. Friend that there will undoubtedly be regret that we have decided not to proceed with the next phase of the NH90 collaborative project. I also believe that that decision will be understood. There are not many countries that are prepared to carry on with a collaborative project when they have no prospect of ordering any of the aircraft that might come out of it. I believe that that is a reasonable proposition.

I am not sure about the exaggerated expectations raised, if they were, by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about these matters. It is a pity if such expectations were raised. However, I do not believe the question of the Sikorsky Black Hawk is relevant to these considerations——

Mr. Doug Hoyle: Nobody wants it.

Mr. Younger: I am assured by the company that, even supposing there were orders for the Black Hawk, it would not produce any work for the company for about five years. It is not in five years hence that Westland will have a problem, but in the next two years. Therefore, whether the Black Hawk is a desirable development or not, it is not a solution for the short-term problem at Westland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It was on 18 November 1985, long before any political difficulties, that I was shown round the Yeovil plant by Captain Gueterbock and trade unionists. Did the Secretary of State know that there were political overtones and political associations? That was the view of one of the Westland executives on the radio yesterday morning. Cannot such problems be exorcised only by the truth?

What is the Government's view of the "World in Action" one-hour programme on Westland? If that programme is not representative and a fair reflection of the truth should not the Government ask for an apology from Granada Television? If it is the truth does it not reveal the sheer depth of the Prime Minister's deception of Parliament on this matter? After all——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must rephrase that please—nobody deliberately deceives anyone in this House.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I am not—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please do not challenge the Chair on that. Please withdraw and rephrase the question.

Mr. Dalyell: This is a fair reflection, Mr. Speaker, of a programme that 8 million people have seen.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a very experienced parliamentarian. I am asking him please to withdraw that comment and rephrase his question.

Mr. Dalyell: The programme says that the Prime Minister must have known the role of the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are dealing with some new orders that have been given to Westland today, not with a television programme.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sorry. A senior executive of that company has said on radio that this is one of the problems——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not mind about that, but I must ask the hon. Gentleman please to withdraw what he said about deliberate deception and rephrase his question.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sorry, but this is a fair precis of a programme that 8 million people have seen——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not concerned with the programme or what was on it, but I am asking the hon. Gentleman to do what I have asked and I urge him to do that.

Mr. Dalyell: Well, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Dalyell: A Member of Parliament——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows the rules of the House as well as anyone. Please will he rephrase his question.

Mr. Dalyell: There is no way of rephrasing it honestly. The fact is that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the hon. Gentleman that if he does not rephrase his question I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell rose——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has heard what I have said.

Mr. Dalyell: Then, frankly, I think that the only reasonable thing to do is for me to withdraw.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip, Northwood): May I say to my right hon. Friend how warmly I applaud his decision to procure the utility version of the EH101. In so doing will it not also enhance the potential civil sales of the

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

aeroplane, as the transport variant can, as he has demonstrated, be developed more quickly than the naval variant? Can my right hon. Friend also tell the House whether the EH101 is to be powered by the Anglo-French RTM322 engine into which the Government have put funds? Last, but not least, will the EH101 be flown by the Royal Air Force as would be normal in the circumstances?

Mr. Younger: On the last point, I assure my hon. Friend that that will be the case. There are discussions on those matters, but no change is contemplated at the present time. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about applauding the order for the EH101 utility version. He is absolutely right that this is an aircraft that should have a good civilian market. I attended its roll-out earlier this week and saw the initital civilian version of this aircraft. It looks an extremely attractive buy and I hope that it will do well. There are still discussions going on as to which precise engine will be used in this aircraft and it is not yet decided whether it will be the the RTM322. However, I recognise my hon. Friend's interest in that.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Given the battle that was fought in the Tory party over the Westland workers and the fact that the solution that won that battle has not offered long-term security for the jobs of those who work in the Westland company, is not early-day motion 317, which I tabled 15 months ago, ever more urgent today? It called for the public ownership and the integration of Westland into the rest of the aerospace sector.

Given the present urgency, for example, for the air-lifting of grain to famine-stricken areas of the world—*[Interruption.]* Why is the Secretary of State prepared to come to the Dispatch Box today and witness the destruction of a further 2,000 jobs in that industry? Those workers will take no comfort from his synthetic sympathy this afternoon or from his promises for future job security. They heard all that last year.

Mr. Younger: We are very grateful to have that contribution from the hon. Gentleman, from the depth of his roots in the west country. Those roots are very apparent. I do not agree that this does not give long-term security to the employees of Westland. I understand from the company that there may be some who will lose their jobs—that is extremely regrettable. But this announcement does give some long-term security to the company in the future and, as I said, it has a large order book stretching well through the 1990s.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's suggestion of the public ownership of Westland—I think that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) will agree with me—if there is any cause that would have absolutely unaminous support in the west country, it would be opposition to a proposal of public ownership of Westland. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is out on a limb there.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): As someone representing an area significantly affected by this statement, I thank my right hon. Friend for the positive way in which he has responded to representations made to him about the need for some additional helicopter orders to see the company through the two-year revenue gap between 1988 and 1990.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the job losses announced today by the company are highly regrettable? However, is he aware that the company has confirmed that many of the redundancies would have happened anyway? Is it not highly irresponsible and untrue for Opposition Members to try to lay all the blame at the Government's door? In fact, the additional orders that my right hon. Friend has announced today are a significant help to that company.

Mr. Younger: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. I can certainly say, as he said, that all the representations that I have had from Members of Parliament who represent people in that part of the country which Westland covers have been extremely effective. People have been very diligent in letting me know the needs of the company. I am grateful to all of them. The answer to my hon. Friend's second point is contained in statement that the company issued this afternoon. It says:

"It should be noted some further reduction in the size of the workforce would have had to take place under any order secenario to improve competitiveness."

I think that that is the answer my hon. Friend is seeking.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): But, on the other hand, one of those workers who has lost his job as a result of the company's statement might have a different story to tell. The chances are that that person, or one of the 1,000 or 1,200 people who have been put on the scrap heap, might well say that, 12 months ago, it was the Labour Opposition who were correct in their stance in trying to ensure that the operation was carried out in a different fashion.

Mr. Ashdown: Seventeen hundred to one.

Mr. Skinner: They might well conclude that the Liberal spokesman, Mr. Paddy Backdown, who is currently heckling, has got it wrong again, and that the Sikorsky plan has now bitten the dust. Some of those workers on the dole might well say that once more here is another example of Britian's manufacturing base being reduced. No wonder the Japanese are laughing all the way to the bank. There is only one person in Britain laughing more than the Japanese, and that is the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine).

Mr. Younger: I am not sure that the view from Bolsover is any more convincing than the view from Coventry. I prefer the view from the west country, which will be relieved to have a clear indication about the future of Westland. That will be much more welcome to people in the west country than the sort of political nonsense that others are producing.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I visited Westland in September and heard then from senior executives. We have heard again since that time that the company's greatest worry was the gap in orders that it had coming up in two years' time. Today's news will come as a profound relief to the company. Can my right hon. Friend say whether our Italian collaborators in this project are likely to accelerate the ordering of their requirements for the EH101, and can he say a little more about the hope for export orders for the EH101?

Mr. Younger: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for what he says. He is absolutely right. The really critical matter is the short-term gap over the next two years in the Westland work load. I hope the House will feel that I have

certainly done everything I possibly can to help about that, although, unfortunately, it was not possible altogether to eliminate that gap.

My hon. Friend asked about export orders. It can only be helpful that there has been a successful roll-out of the new aeroplane and that the first orders placed for it are from the British Government. Such orders are always the first catalyst in getting orders from overseas. I very much hope that that is what will now ensue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will call the four hon. Members who are standing and then the Opposition Front Bench. After that we must move on.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Although the Department has taken rather a long time to produce the statement, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the realism that it contains. He mentioned the Chinook support helicopter. Is he satisfied about the safety of that helicopter, bearing in mind recent incidents in the North sea and in the Falklands? Can he give us an assurance that the tremendous work of supporting and upgrading the fleet of helicopters owned by his Department will be generously shared with private enterprise?

Mr. Younger: I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome. My hon. Friend asked about the Chinook helicopters that we have in service with the armed forces. I can assure him that we take the greatest care to investigate most carefully all the incidents that have taken place. Although we have not yet had complete conclusions about those, and certainly not about the regrettable recent incident in the Falklands, inquiries are continuing. I assure him that the Chinooks involved were of a different type from that which was involved in another recent incident in the Shetlands. That is why it is taking longer to work out the precise cause.

In terms of the general ordering of helicopters, my hon. Friend is correct in his assessment that what we really need is some certainty for the future.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, while the orders that he has announced will be important in leading to future security for Westland, they are, perhaps, of even greater importance in securing the future of the subsidiaries of Westland. FPT in Portsmouth, for example, has succeeded in selling components to aircraft and helicopter manufacturers in the United States and the health of that company depends very much on the long-term success of Westland itself.

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend. The success of subsidiaries depends upon the health of the parent company and subsidiaries of Westland must at least be assisted by today's announcement. Of course, it is for Westland to decide the future work load for any subsidiaries. My hon. Friend is quite right in looking for future security as the most important matter. My hon. Friend and other hon. Members asked about the future servicing by Westland of the existing helicopter fleet. The company will be reorganising itself with the full intention of carrying on the excellent service that it presently gives.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): What will be the implications of my right hon. Friend's statement for the contractors and potential contractors of Westland? Will he confirm that his statement means that Britain will have a sustained helicopter industry well into the next century?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend's first point is very much a matter for Westland, now that it knows the ordering position. In answer to my hon. Friend's second question, there is no doubt that after the first difficult year or two of a gap in orders, Westland now has a very large order book with orders amounting to many hundreds of millions of pounds. That is a good long-term prospect for the employees of Westland and for the communities in which they live.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): In welcoming my right hon. Friend's statement and its commitment to British jobs in the helicopter industry, may I ask him whether he can assure the House that this will also lead to a substantial number of jobs being generated in the British electronic and communications industries, and that orders for such products resulting from these contracts will not go to foreign companies?

Mr. Younger: I do not expect that Westland will in any way change its normal practice which, I think, is always to give the maximum participation to contractors with which the company has done business in the past.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Eighteen months ago we had the high drama of Westland, and today we have had demonstrated the farce of the Sikorsky solution and the tragedy for the many employees who will lose their jobs. I should be grateful if the Secretary of State could tell us precisely how many jobs will go and from where. He quoted extensively from the company's statement. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) yesterday suggested that 1,500 would go there. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who must be wondering about the way that he urged his constituents to vote last year, suggested that 1,000 jobs would go at Yeovil. Can the Secretary of State give a more precise estimate of the number of real jobs that will go?

The sub-contractors to Westland have been concerned over the past few years about their future. What estimate has been made of the number of sub-contracting jobs that will go? The right hon. Gentleman said that some extra money will come from outside the defence budget. Can he tell us what extra money, how much and for how long? He also said that the rest of the money would come from expenditure within the budget. Can he say how much, for how many years, and where the cuts will be made to meet that additional expenditure?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the order for Lynx goes nowhere towards meeting the Army's needs for battlefield helicopters on the central front? It will not solve the problem of our conventional helicopter needs in that area. Our NATO allies have suggested that we need at least an additional 100 helicopters. The decision announced today may assert the viability of Westland in the near future, but it does nothing to meet the need for a European pillar of collaboration or the real defence needs of the British Army on the central front. For many constituents of Conservative and Liberal Members in the west country it will bring nothing but heartbreak.

Mr. Younger: I rather feel that that was the question that the hon. Gentleman had hoped to be able to ask

[Mr. Younger]

before he heard the statement, because it does not bear any relation to the scale of the announcement that I made today. First, it is quite wrong to produce comments or suggestions as if Sikorsky has somehow let everybody down in this matter. In fact, it has fulfilled all that it undertook to do in taking its interest in Westland. There is no sense, profit or truth in trying to suggest that in any way it has let down Westland or us. That is not the case.

On the estimate of job losses, as the hon. Gentleman will perhaps appreciate, it is not I who run Westland. It is up to Westland to work out the consequences to it of the orders that I have announced today. It is perfectly clear that those consequences will be much better after today's announcement than they would have been if the announcement had not been made. That applies also to the point that the hon. Gentleman raised about sub-contractors—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman would find it easier to get answers to his questions if he listened to them.

The sub-contractors will benefit from the fact that this large number of new orders is being given to the company. When one adds together all the orders that I have announced today, those that the company already has in hand, the naval version of the EH101, which has been on the cards for some time, and the possibility of export orders, it is clear that we are discussing a company which, over the next decade or so, has orders worth well over £1 billion. It cannot be said that that is disastrous news either for the company or for the subcontractors who work for it.

As far as expenditure being within budget is concerned, any expenditure on defence is expenditure that cannot be made twice. Therefore, if one buys anything with the defence budget, one cannot buy something else. However, it is different in this case in that I have got some extra money—this will be published in due course—for the 16 Lynxes that we have added to the order today.

Finally, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Lynx is no use for the Army's need for battlefield helicopters. That is correct because it is not intended for that purpose. As the hon. Gentleman will know, there is a joint project with the Italians, whereby the A129 Agusta battlefield helicopter is under a project definition stage with the Italian partners. The Army's need for battlefield helicopters may eventually be met there, and not in this announcement today. It is quite irrelevant to bring it in today.

British Gas (Multiple Share Applications)

5.2 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the thousands of illegal multiple applications for shares in last year's British Gas privatisation".

It has been brought to public attention today by the accountants, Touche Ross, brought in to police the flotation of British Gas, that they have discovered what appear to be some substantial attempts at fraud in the British Gas share offer.

That report surely calls into question the Government's entire privatisation programme, both past and planned. That public assets such as British Gas should be put at the mercy of organised share-dealing rings and individuals, whose whole motivation is private greed, is a disgrace.

The public and the House have a right to know whether the Conservative party will write to British Gas shareholders for donations to its fighting fund, and also issue a survey asking those people what should be sold off next from the public sector, as it did to British Telecom shareholders.

Touche Ross must be congratulated on using, for the first time, computers to cross-check names and addresses. It is a shame that that system was not used in the past, as it would, presumably, have saved the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) the bother of writing six times to an hon. Member of this House asking for his party's paydirt for the selling off of the national asset of British Telecom.

Finally, it is thought that the multiple applications alone are larger than the 6,600 in the British Telecom case, and that the sums of money involved are higher. This House should have the opportunity to discuss this specific and important matter before the Government proceed with any further privatisation, especially with the proposed sale of Rolls-Royce, which seems to make this a matter for the most urgent consideration. I beg to seek leave to move the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the thousands of illegal multiple applications for shares in last year's British Gas privatisation".

I listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Birkbeck College (Grant)

5.4 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The cut of half a million pounds in the grant from the university of London to Birkbeck college in the 1987-88 academic year and the prospects of a further sharp decline in the following two years".

That has happened in spite of the commitment by the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he introduced the White Paper:

"I want to encourage more people of all ages to go on to higher education."—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1987; Vol. 113, c. 1098.]

He made it plain that he regarded the admission of more mature students as a "challenge" to the universities.

Birkbeck is determined to meet those challenges and to continue to provide for its existing students. How then can the Government allow these savage cuts in its grant when, over recent weeks, the Under-Secretary of State has said that Birkbeck should be treated as a special factor in the University Grants Committee's calculation of its block grant to the university of London? A letter from the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) made the same commitments. The Government should now ensure that proper funds are made available to the university of London so that it can treat Birkbeck as a special factor.

The matter is specific and urgent. The future of Birkbeck college and its tradition of part-time education, leading to degrees, depends on the decisions made over the next few weeks. The House should debate this matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the serious cut in funding for Birkbeck college in the next, 1987-88, and subsequent, financial year".

I regret that I have to give the hon. Lady the same answer that I gave her hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). I do not consider the matter as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and cannot, therefore, submit her application to the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Colleges of Education (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 309), be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Malone.*]

Orders of the Day

Debtors (Scotland) Bill [*Lords*]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

REPLACEMENT OF WARRANT SALES BY DEBT ARBITRATION SERVICE

'(1) Within twelve months of the enactment of this Act, the practice of poinding and warrant sales in connection with domestic debt shall be completely abolished and the Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament an order to set up a Debt Arbitration Service to deal with cases of domestic debt, where either the debtor or the creditor wishes to refer the matter to the Debt Arbitration Service.

(2) For the purposes of this Act, domestic debt means a debt incurred and owed by an individual, as distinct from a company or body corporate.

(3) The order under subsection (1) of this section shall be subject to affirmative approval of the House of Commons'.—[*Mr. Canavan.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.7 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 2, in clause 16, page 14, leave out lines 25 to line 7 on page 15 and insert—

'(2) All household goods belonging to a debtor shall be exempt from poinding.'.

Mr. Canavan: When the Bill was first mentioned in the Queen's Speech last November, I gave it a qualified welcome because, with other hon. Members, I thought that it was long overdue that something should be done to change the law on warrant sales. However, the reason why I gave the Bill only a qualified welcome was that I feared that when it was published it would bring about only minor changes in the existing law, as has happened with these rather pussyfooting proposals, rather than seek the more radical solution of the outright abolition of warrant sales.

When people outside Scotland hear that we still have the practice of poinding and warrant sales, they wonder what sort of civilised society we live in when a sheriff officer can go along and batter on someone's door—in certain circumstances, batter down the door without that person even knowing—and proceed to earmark personal property and goods, to be the subject of a sale. At one time there was certainly much agreement on both sides of the House that something should be done to end this barbaric practice. Indeed, the Scottish Law Commission set up an investigation into the whole system well over a decade ago, but clearly it has been dragging its heels. I understand that its modest proposals are behind the Bill.

My new clause goes further than the Scottish Law Commission's recommendations and considerably further than the proposals in the Bill. The new clause seeks to abolish completely the practice of poinding and warrant sales in Scotland and to replace it with the much fairer system of debt arbitration. That would be in the interests of both debtor and consumer. Rather than try to rush the matter through, I am prepared to give the Secretary of State, the Solicitor-General for Scotland and their

[Mr. Canavan]

ministerial colleagues a 12-month period in which to introduce the appropriate prohibition and parliamentary order to set up the new system of debt arbitration.

I am sure that during the various stages of the Bill it has been suggested that warrant sales are no longer the problem that they once were. It is true that their frequency has decreased in recent years. That may well be partly because of parliamentary pressure from hon. Members, such as me and my late hon. Friend Jimmy Dempsey, who had the privilege to represent the constituency of Coatbridge and Airdrie, now Monklands, West. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and his predecessor for their excellent work, and to the trade unions, such as SOGAT, which took direct action in refusing to advertise warrant sales. Partly because of such pressure, the incidence of warrant sales has decreased in recent years. Indeed, I do not know of a single warrant sale which has taken place in my constituency since I started to apply parliamentary pressure by introducing private Member's Bills.

Although we welcome the decreasing incidence of warrant sales, it is worth pointing out to the Solicitor-General for Scotland that poinding, advertising and the build-up to a warrant sale are a distressing experience, even if the sale is eventually called off. It is a form of legalised intimidation, public humiliation and punishment, rather than a constructive attempt to get a debt repaid.

Most of the debts are personal or domestic as distinct from debts incurred or owed by companies and bodies corporate. That is why my new clause refers only to personal or domestic debts. Most of them amount to less than £100 and are not contested. In the majority of cases the debtor admits that he or she has incurred the debt and is usually willing to make some effort to repay it. But all too often he or she cannot repay the debt, possibly because of a change of circumstance—for example, unemployment, sickness or a change in family circumstances. Certainly the Government must bear some of the responsibility in this respect, as high unemployment has been exacerbated by their economic policies.

5.15 pm

In the majority of cases there is no need to go trailing along to a sheriff court or any other court to prove the debt because the debt is admitted and the debtor is willing to repay it. Surely it makes sense to set up a debt arbitration service where both creditor and debtor can get together through an independent arbitrator and reach some sort of out-of-court settlement. If such a voluntary settlement fails, the debt arbitration officer could be given the power to enforce the repayment by instalments or, in the last resort, by the arrestment of wages.

In the past we have seen similar debts settled with some success by various arbitrators set up by Governments. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, for example, has had some success in settling industrial relations cases, and the rent officer system has in many cases led to the determination of a fair rent rather than an excessive one. Therefore, it seems that the introduction of the system of debt arbitration would be a reasonable and constructive way of dealing with the problem. Certainly it would be more constructive than the existing system of warrant sales or threatened warrant sales.

I have not yet seen the speech of the Solicitor-General for Scotland—and certainly I have not helped him to write it—but he will almost certainly refer to the possible expense of a debt arbitration scheme, but the warrant sales system is considerably expensive. Indeed, the expenses incurred through poinding, advertising and even the sale itself sometimes far outweigh the original debt. Constituents have come to me about expenses which have been 10 or 20 times the amount of the original debt. Therefore, the existing system does not make financial sense.

Moreover, the public purse could save itself court expenses. Obviously, people would go to the debt arbitration officer rather than to court, which would reduce some of the work load and expenses of the court system. If there is any serious threat of an increase in expenditure because of the new system, a levy could be made on credit companies, particularly big credit companies, which do not always act responsibly. Indeed, some act irresponsibly by encouraging people on low incomes to take on debts far beyond their means. Then, when circumstances change, whether through sickness, death in the family or unemployment, those people often find it absolutely impossible to repay the debt under the terms demanded by the credit companies. There may well be a case there for a levy on the credit companies to meet the expense of any new system.

As a long-time campaigner for this measure, I have made several previous attempts to introduce a private Member's Bill. I have checked *Hansard* for 3 June 1981 and looked at the sponsors I managed to get for my private Member's Bill, because I realise that on such a measure there could sometimes be an advantage in getting support from both sides of the House. Four Scottish Tory Members sponsored me, including Mr. David Myles—who is no longer with us here—his good and dear friend and neighbour the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) and their good friend the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) as well as the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), who is now a Minister in the Scottish Office. Unfortunately, whether by accident or design, he is not here. If he were, obviously I should be urging him to support me with his voice and vote.

I appeal to the Solicitor-General, on the ground that there is a consensus within Scotland, irrespective of party political divisions in the House or in Scotland in general, to end this system. The vast majority of the people of Scotland want to end it. They do not want a tinkering with the system through these pussyfooting reforms proposed by the Government; they want complete abolition of the system. The system of warrant sales is seen as a barbaric, inhuman, medieval practice which has caused undue hardship to countless thousands of people and their families. It is high time that the House of Commons abolished it for ever.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I rise to support the new clause and the amendment. We are presumably talking about a small number of cases when we discuss warrant sales, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) suggests, an arbitration service could play a useful role. The Solicitor-General knows that I am unhappy with the notion that a debtor's effects can be auctioned off in a local sales room. We disagree about the usefulness of such a measure. On

Second Reading I said that holding the sale in an auction room was an improvement on a warrant sale being held in a debtor's house, but that it was an unsatisfactory arrangement because the stigma is still there and little money would be raised from such a sale given the rings that we know are organised by furniture dealers and others when such sales take place.

My hon. Friend's new clause is an even better proposal than that of removing the warrant sale from the debtor's house and taking it to the auction room. I believe that the concept of a debt arbitration service is good and constructive and is certainly worthy of consideration by this Government and their successors.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In addressing myself in the main to amendment No. 2, I must say that I welcome the reference by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) to my predecessor, the late Jimmy Dempsey. Jimmy Dempsey shared our repugnance for warrant sales in any form and my hon. Friend, whose comments were most generous and should be much appreciated, will know that on Second Reading, as well as in Committee, the Opposition placed on record very firmly the view that warrant sales in every shape or form ought to be abolished.

In saying that all household goods belonging to a debtor should be exempt from poinding, we are trying to give effect to the thinking expressed in the Scottish Law Commission's report, which obviously influenced the Government in drafting the Bill that they have put before the House. In Committee, I was left with the impression that certainly the Opposition wanted to see householders protected from humiliation and from the idea that sheriff officers can involve themselves in poinding various goods which are outlined in clause 16. Some are exempted: beds or bedding, household linen, and so on. The Solicitor-General will recall that in Committee we had some doubts as to whether a washing machine might be the subject of exemption. To put the matter beyond any doubt, we thought it right to table this new clause making it clear that all household goods belonging to a debtor shall be exempt from poinding.

We believe that the Bill would be improved thereby and that assistance would be given to the debtor as well as to the creditor. The great mass of evidence that we have seen suggests that people find themselves in debt not because there is a willingness on their part to be in that position, but for other reasons. We believe that help is needed and that the legislation that we seek to introduce should be of assistance to the debtor and to the creditor in trying to find a solution to the problem by ensuring that the debt is paid, in time, without humiliating the householder or his family.

We believe that if the new clause were accepted, it would put this matter beyond question and, above all, remove any suggestion of humiliation in the way that has rightly been held in contempt by my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and Falkirk, West.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): I suspect that I am suffering this afternoon for having pointed out on Second Reading that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) was not present. Nevertheless, in spite of the crack that I made then, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting forward this new clause on debt arbitration rather than the arrangements which we discussed in Committee.

As the hon. Gentleman may recall, The Labour party put forward certain proposals to the Scottish Law Commission during the course of its deliberations suggesting that there should be a debt arbitration service of some sort, and the Commissoner recorded the following in paragraph 2.85 of its report;

"It would appear that poindings and warrant sales"—

in relation to such a debt arbitration service—

"would not be permitted, though this is not entirely clear."

The hon Gentleman suggests the introduction of a debt arbitration service and the abolition in its entirety of the diligence of poinding and warrant sale. His colleagues have certainly been criticised during the passage of the Bill for failing to put forward any alternative of this character, and to that extent at least it is interesting that the hon. Gentleman should have done so. But it seems to me that there are a number of quite significant flaws in the way in which he has proposed it.

First, let me say that I am aware of the Bill that the hon. Gentleman introduced in 1981. There was some obscurity in that Bill about what would be required in terms of enforcement. The hon. Gentleman has changed his proposal from personal debt in his Bill in 1981 to domestic debt in this new clause. I think that I understand what is intended, but either definition would take us further into commercial matters than I suspect the hon. Gentleman intended. For instance, partners may in some circumstances be personally liable for the debts of the partnership. Those debts might thus be regarded as domestic within the meaning of the new clause.

5.30 pm

I rehearsed the arguments for and against the retention of poinding and sale at some length during the earlier stages of the Bill. I went into the arguments for reform rather than abolition in some detail on Second Reading. I do not propose to rehearse those arguments again. Suffice to say that the Scottish Law Commission advanced many cogent arguments against abolition in chapter 2 of its report, and the retention of a reformed procedure was the starting point of the recommendations in that report, and indeed that is the foundation on which the Bill is built.

I want to consider the somewhat unspecific debt arbitration service proposed by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West. I suppose that its purpose will be to arrange for payment by instalments and to interrupt enforcement of debts by the diligences still available to creditors. The hon. Gentleman may want the Secretary of State to set up an arbitration service similar to that proposed by the Scottish Consumer Council. Indeed, that might be a more workable system than that suggested by the hon. Gentleman. As the hon. Gentleman has developed his argument, I understand that he wants to get rid of all poinding and warrant sales. He does not simply want that system as an opt-out arrangement as the Scottish Consumer Council suggested.

I understand how a debt arbitration system would work in cases where people had a multiplicity of debts and no significant assets out of which to make payment, but the hon. Gentleman has not addressed himself to the debtor —perhaps the hon. Member for Falkirk, West himself— who is simply unco-operative, but who has sufficient means to pay his debts. Such a person may simply be unco-operative over the payments due. Such a debtor may not be in any real significant financial difficulty; he may simply decline to pay. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West

[Mr. Peter Fraser]

has not made it clear what will happen under a debt arbitration system if a debtor simply declines to participate in that arrangement for debt arbitration. Is that person entitled simply to shrug his shoulders and go off?

I suppose that it is possible, given the very much improved arrangements for arrestment in a later part of the Bill, that the system could be operated. However, what will happen when someone has a valuable moveable asset —for example, a Van Gogh hanging on the wall of his house? In such a circumstance, if the hon. Gentleman's scheme were followed, there would be no way in which the owner of the Van Gogh's perfectly lawful creditors would be able to get satisfaction for the debts owed to them.

Mr. Canavan: The new clause makes it perfectly clear that either the debtor or the creditor can refer the matter to the debt arbitration service in a case such as that outlined by the Solicitor-General, in which a fairly rich debtor is simply being unco-operative in paying the debt. There is nothing to stop the creditor going to the debt arbitration service.

During my speech, I said that the debt arbitration officer could, and in my view should, be given the power to enforce the repayment of the debt in cases where there is clearly an ability to repay the debt, but the debtor is unwilling to pay. I do not know of anyone who has a Van Gogh or a Rembrandt who does not have a few bob in the bank as well. It would be more practical, to achieve a constructive repayment of the debt, to arrest that person's wages or unearned income or whatever than to grab the Rembrandt or Van Gogh and to sell it at a warrant sale. Frankly, the Solicitor-General's example was ridiculous.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman is trying to slip around the point. He will not face the fact that the example that he has just given would require the individual—whom he describes as the debt arbitration officer — to have power to enforce the system. The hon. Gentleman must face this point. It is a matter of intellectual argument. What powers of enforcement would he grant to that individual? If a debtor simply says that he accepts that he owes the debt but will not pay it, what will happen then? An arrestment may be made, but that is elaborate and clumsy. If someone owes a large sum of money——

Mr. Canavan: What did the Government do to the National Union of Mineworkers? They seized its bloody funds.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I do not think that I will go down that particular path; nor will I adopt the hon. Gentleman's unparliamentary language.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Is the situation that my hon. and learned Friend has described, in which an arbitrator has no power, similar to that of a Chairman of a Committee of this House who has no power in Committee to eject an hon. Member who is not a member of that Committee, but who is disrupting the proceedings of that Committee and of the House?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I grasp my hon. Friend's allusion, but Opposition Members may rest assured that I shall not follow my hon. Friend down that route.

There is a substantial difficulty. As I said to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West a moment ago, bodies such as the Scottish Consumer Council have carefully considered the possibility of a debt arbitration service. However, those bodies did not slip away from facing up to the difficulty that, if such a system existed, it could be introduced only as an option or alternative. It would not be possible to introduce a coherent and workable scheme if, as an ultimate remedy, no form of enforcement was retained through the reformed procedures of poinding and warrant sales.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, West said that if we talk to anyone outside Scotland, that person will not have heard of poinding or warrant sales. That is correct. I do not know of any other system with practices called poinding or warrant sales. However, there is no mature legal system—as far as I am aware—that does not have at least a comparable system.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) spoke briefly about amendment No. 2:

"All household goods belonging to a debtor shall be exempt from poinding."

We had considerable discussion about that in Committee. I immediately have difficulty about the provision that the hon. Gentleman suggests. What are household goods?

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *indicated dissent.*

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is shaking his head in a knowledgeable way. However, according to amendment No. 2, anything that is contained in a house, whatever its value, whatever its use, or whatever reasonable use is required of it—

Mr. Kirkwood: What about the Van Gogh?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman wants to pursue my example. If there is a valuable painting on a wall, is that "household goods"?

Mr. Kirkwood: Of course it is.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is highly arguable whether it is. If the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire says that it is not part of household goods, he is effectively saying that we should consider the list in clause 16 of the Bill and decide that household goods do not include paintings on walls, satin pillows or such things. Rather, they are goods that are reasonably required for people to carry on their lives. The Government and the Scottish Law Commission believe that——

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No, I want to finish my point.

We have said that the proper way to approach the matter is to have an extensive list—one that is much more extensive than the previous list. For example, according to amendment No. 2, if a warehouse were full of refrigerators and there was a commercial debt, there can be no doubt that refrigerators are household goods. In such circumstances, all those items would be exempted from poinding and ultimately from warrant sales.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West has made several efforts to extend the list in clause 16 and to modify some of its provisions. I have given some examples showing how difficult it would be to rely on such a broad

test. If we did so, we would be considering what are truly commercial debts. Far from there being less difficulty, there is a grave possibility that we would have to leave it to the courts in circumstance after circumstance to decide whether paintings or other items were truly household goods. Far from Parliament or the Scottish Law Commission deciding what should be included in the list, effectively we would be asking the courts to determine for us what should be included in the definition of household goods.

Mr. Tom Clarke: In Committee, the hon. and learned Gentleman did not have much difficulty in explaining to my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), who had some doubts about whether a washing machine was exempt, that it was. Why is the hon. and learned Gentleman so confident about that? Where does a dish-washing machine figure in the Government's thinking? In the absence of a clear explanation, does the hon. and learned Gentleman not feel that "household goods" is a much clearer definition than what appears in clause 16?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: We are going to move quite a long way from the amendment. Clause 16(2) contains an extensive list of what is required. I thought that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) understood from my answer that we did not include the term "washing machine" but relied on a broader definition. We wanted to ensure that we were talking not simply about a washing machine, rather than a spin drier—or, to develop the technology of the times, the two incorporated in a single appliance, with the problem of deciding whether it was or was not a washing machine. Accordingly, we decided that it was safer to use the broader definition in clause 16(2).

I have said why I do not accept the view of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West of a debt arbitration service. I am surprised at the approach of the hon. Member for Monklands, West, who fought valiantly in Committee to refine clause 16(2). He now shrugs his shoulders and says that all household goods are to be exempted. That would mean that the courts would have to decide what should or should not be included.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I have a great deal of sympathy with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) because of the simplicity it offers. I notice that under clause 16(3) the Lord Advocate may add to or delete from the list from time to time. The hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well that it is a long time since we have heard about an exercise in diligence of this kind. Work has been going on for 17 or 18 years on the present exercise. Would the Lord Advocate be prepared to add to or delete from the list annually? Things change rapidly. I, for one, should be greatly reassured if the Lord Advocate were to do this annually.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman an undertaking that the Lord Advocate will do so annually. But the right hon. Gentleman clearly appreciates the provisions of clause 16(3), which states:

"The Lord Advocate may by regulations add to the list . . . delete or vary any of the items".

I cannot immediately envisage any item that needs to be added to or deleted from the list. However, if at any time it is thought that the list should be added to or varied, that can be done without any 10-year consideration of the item. It can be done immediately. I do not envisage that, if the Lord Advocate decided that an item should be added to the list, and accordingly excluded from what might be subject to poinding and warrant sales, it would excite much controversy in the House.

5.45 pm

Mr. Canavan: I do not see any difficulty about the interpretation of "household goods". The Solicitor-General for Scotland is talking absolute rubbish. Under the prohibited items, page 15 of the Bill lists

"tools used for maintenance or repair of the dwellinghouse or of household articles."

"Household articles" is clear by definition and is not subject to interpretation by a sheriff. What, therefore, is wrong with the term "household goods", used by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I know that the hon. Gentleman had a lot to think about as I was speaking, following my attack on his proposed debt arbitration service.

Mr. Canavan: What is the answer?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: If I am provoking the hon. Gentleman, I withdraw. I want to get on with the debate. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to have grasped one problem.

If amendment No. 2 were to be accepted, not only would household goods in the debtor's home be excluded from poinding but, if the debtor happened to be a commercial man who had a warehouse full of refrigerators, hi-fis, and so on, those items would not be subject to poinding and warrant sale. For that reason, I hope that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West is prepared to withdraw the motion and new clause. If the hon. Members for Falkirk, West and for Monklands, West continue to have any misgivings about what is excluded in clause 16(2) from poinding and warrant sales, an opportunity remains immediately the Bill becomes law to make representations to the Lord Advocate to add to or vary by regulation what is included in the list.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 5

Time to pay orders

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 5, line 1, leave out from first 'arrestment' to 'has' in line 2.

This is a technical amendment designed to improve the clarity of the clause.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 32

Location of sale

Mr. Tom Clarke: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 25, line 25, leave out from 'except' to end of line 27 and insert

'in the case where an auction room or suitable alternative premises is not available in the vicinity.'.

The amendment is dear to the hearts of a number of my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who expressed some of his opinions earlier today. We are confused about the Government's thinking on where the sale of a person's goods should take place. We do not support the view that it should take place in the house. We resisted the Government's thinking so far as we could on Second Reading and in Committee but could not persuade the Government to share our views.

On Second Reading, the Solicitor-General for Scotland distinguished between circumstances in, for example, the constituency of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and circumstances in my constituency. Ever since, even after the hon. and learned Gentleman's explanation, I have been thinking about exactly what he meant. In an endeavour to co-operate with his thinking, I suggest that this amendment might be acceptable. It would mean that a sale would not take place in a person's house, even if he had been persuaded against his wishes to hold it there. Even if he exercised all the rights that the Bill would give him to consult with other occupiers, and so on, it would not remove the stigma which long remains after a sale takes place in a person's house. Therefore, in the light of the Government's logic, in so far as we could understand it, there was virtually no case for insisting that a sale should take place in a person's house. We are, therefore, offering the option in this amendment, solely in circumstances where an auction room or other suitable alternative premises is available in the vicinity, for such a sale to take place.

What we have tried to do is to simplify the whole exercise and to introduce as much dignity as we can into these proceedings. We feel that if there is an option available, although the Solicitor-General will say that it might cost money, when set against the humiliation that would be guaranteed if a house is used, the cost of an auction room is the lesser of the two evils. In that spirit I hope that the Solicitor-General will accept the amendment.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: This amendment removes the requirement for the written consent of the debtor or occupier to the sale in a dwelling-house and allows such sales to take place where an auction room or suitable alternative premises is not available in the vicinity. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I think something has gone slightly wrong with his amendment because it removes the critical or crucial requirement for the debtor's or occupier's written consent to a sale in a dwelling-house. I do not think the hon. Gentleman intended the amendment to come out in that way.

If the amendment were to be effected, there would be the opportunity for a sale in a dwelling-house if there were no alternative auction rooms available, but it would remove the requirement for consent. As I said both at Second Reading and in Committee, the circumstances in which a warrant sale might take place in a house are very limited. We believe that if such a sale is to take place, it must be not only with the consent of the debtor but also that of the occupier, who might be a different person in many circumstances.

I am not trying to twist the hon. Gentleman's tail purely for the sheer pleasure of it, but the effect of what he has put down would achieve an objective that is wholly contrary to what he is trying to do. In certain circumstances it might be far more damaging to a debtor than what the Government are proposing.

Mr. Clarke: I am always anxious to reciprocate the generosity that we receive from the Government side of the House, but the Solicitor-General has misunderstood the amendment. The effect of this amendment would underscore our opinion that these sales should not be taking place in homes or houses in any case. If we argue and pursue the principle that it is wrong for sales to take place in a given house, there is no need to qualify that argument by saying that one ought to consult the occupier. The basic thrust of the amendment is that there should not be sales in houses at all unless it can be shown that alternative and suitable premises are not available, so that the sale can take place.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I think the hon. Gentleman is not quite understanding this. Under what we have proposed, where no auction room is immediately available, for example in the north of Scotland, if the debtor or occupier said, "No, you cannot have a warrant sale and I refuse to consent to a warrant sale in the house," steps would have to be taken to get the goods to an auction room, however far away it was.

Curiously, under the hon. Gentleman's proposal, it would be possible in a rural area, where there is no auction room available, to press ahead with a warrant sale without any consideration of whether the debtor or occupier consents. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head but I trust that the penny is beginning to drop with him and that that is a consequence that he cannot have intended to bring about by his amendment.

We understand that the practical ordinary circumstance will be that a warrant sale will take place in an auction room. We accept that that is the most humane and sensible way to approach it, to secure the anonymity of the debtor and avoid personal humiliation and embarrassment. It is only where the debtor or occupier consents—and there may be good reason for that, if he is leaving the neighbourhood and wants to get as much as possible for the goods without the cost of taking them to an auction room—that he might be prepared, but could not be forced, to have a warrant sale in his home.

Dr. Godman: There is an improvement with the shift to an auction room because it does guarantee anonymity. Is the Solicitor-General satisfied that this Bill protects the interests of a debtor when such a sale takes place in an auction room?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes, and that is a point that I ought to have picked up from the hon. Gentleman's earlier intervention. He possibly has not appreciated that once a debtor's goods go to an auction room, the debtor will be wholly anonymous. Nothing will be tagged on to the goods to indicate that they were taken under warrant sale from such a debtor at such an address. That humiliation will not occur. I am satisfied that once the goods go to the warrant sale, the debtor will not be identified in any way, nor will his goods be identified to the public at large as having belonged to him. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be prepared, now that I have given that explanation, to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 47

GENERAL EFFECT OF EARNINGS ARRESTMENT

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 37, line 16, after 'recalled', insert

'or abandoned by the creditor.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will take amendment No. 13.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: These are technical amendments designed to remove any doubts that an earnings arrestment or a current maintenance arrestment ceases to have effect on its abandonment by the creditor.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 49

DEDUCTIONS FROM NET EARNINGS TO BE MADE BY EMPLOYER

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 37, line 38, after '(1)' insert

'Subject to subsection 6*(a)* below'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will take the following amendments: No. 7, in page 38, line 15, after '(2)', insert

'Subject to subsection 6*(a)* below'.

No. 8, in page 38, line 27, after '(3)' insert

'Subject to subsection 6*(a)* below'.

No. 9, in page 38, line 43, after '(4)' insert

'Subject to subsection 6*(a)* below'.

No. 10, in page 39, line 1, after '(5)' insert

'Subject to subsection 6*(a)* below'.

No. 11, in page 39, line 7, after '(6)' insert

'Subject to subsection 6*(a)* below'.

No. 12, in page 39, line 26, at end insert—

'(6)*(a)* The Court may, on the application of the debtor, reduce the amounts payable under subsections (1) to (6) above.'.

Mr. Millan: These amendments deal with the sliding scale of payments that can be deducted from a debtor's earnings under schedule 2 to the Bill. When I first read the Bill, I was worried about the mechanical nature of the arrangements that are being made. I do not object to that in principle, but I was worried that there is no exception to the arrangements that are laid down in the Bill. I now regret that I did not raise my concern on Second Reading and in Committee. I thought then that I was slightly too worried about the arrangements in the schedule.

Following the Committee Stage, the hon. Members who sat on the Committee received a letter from the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux expressing similar concerns about the fact that there is no provision in the Bill for an exception to the sliding scale arrangements. That is the reason why I put down the amendments.

6 pm

Of course, we all recognise that the arrangements under the Bill generally are a considerable improvement. No one disputes that. If amounts are to be set down in the legislation, they have to be on a sliding scale because they have to take account of the debtor's income. Nevertheless, the figures in schedule 2 that can be deducted weekly are considerable; similar substantial amounts are calculated on a monthly basis. For someone with weekly earnings exceeding £280 but not exceeding £300, the deduction is £83. That is a very large sum to deduct from anyone's income. Anyone who has a big weekly wage is also likely to have large weekly commitments such as a mortgage payment or rent which it may not be easy to set aside. The figures in the schedule are substantial and take no account of the personal circumstances of the debtor.

The purpose of my amendments is to allow a debtor to make application to the court to have the payments reduced. I would not expect such a provision to be used frequently. If it were, I would not expect the court always to give a favourable response to an application; otherwise, there would be little point in writing a sliding scale into the legislation. Nevertheless, flexibility would be preferable to the provision in the Bill.

It is for that reason that I tabled the amendments. As I said, this part of the Bill has worried me from the beginning. I regret that I did not raise it in Committee but it is better to do it now than not at all. The provisions are causing concern elsewhere among people who are familiar with the working of such arrangements. Therefore, it is well that their concerns should be ventilated.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I see force in what the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) has said but I shall not recommend acceptance of the amendment. After a brief explanation, I hope that he will appreciate that the result he seeks can be achieved by a different route. I should point out to him that the Scottish Law Commission considered whether the courts should have the power to vary deductions in paragraphs 6.77 and 6.78 of its report. It concluded that the courts should not have this power, for reasons of practicality. Many earnings arrestments would subsist for only a few months, so that applications for variations of deductions would have to be disposed of quickly; evaluation of the debtor's means and liabilities, however, which is the basis of any application, could take a considerable time.

Moreover, if debtors became aware of the court's powers, there was anxiety that there might be a flood of applications. Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman was aware that that would be an undesirable development. Accordingly, the advantage of simplicity and ease of operation of earnings arrestment would be lost.

From the discussion in Committee, I think we all appreciated that for arrestment of earnings to work satisfactorily it was desirable that the minimum burden should be imposed on the employer, not least because of the difficulties it can cause between employee and employer if the arrangement is too elaborate or clumsy.

What I hope the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate, if he has not done so already, is that if an arrangement is made for earnings arrestment and the debtor finds himself in difficulty in making a payment according to the schedule set out in the Bill, there is an opportunity elsewhere in the Bill for him to apply to the court for a time-to-pay order, proposing a lower rate of payment and a recall of the earnings arrestment. I suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that that will meet his objective. If a debtor found that he could not make a payment, he could make application in this way. If he had a good case, the earnings arrestment would be suspended and a lower rate of payment by instalment rather than by earnings arrestment could be achieved.

[The Solicitor-General for Scotland]

If we are to move away from the statutory schedule of what should be deducted, the advantage of using the time-to-pay order is that the employer would not be asked to apply a different figure and would not have to instruct his or her bookkeeper to make a further deduction. That is a simple and effective way to deal with the matter. I hope I have satisfied the right hon. Gentleman that we take his point, but that it is appropriately dealt with in the Bill.

Mr. Millan: I am grateful for the explanation. I had not realised on reading the Bill that once the process was in operation it would still be open to the debtor to apply to the court for a different arrangement. Whether in practice there would be time for that to be done successfully before the whole debt had been recovered must be doubtful in most cases, but I am satisfied with the explanation given, that there is a mechanism available which I had not understood before. In those circumstances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 73

Interpretation of Part III

Mr. Millan: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 57, line 23, at end insert 'or'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 15, in page 57, line 29, leave out from 'employment' to end of line 30.

No. 16, in page 58, line 4, at end insert—

'*(h)* statutory sick pay.'.

Mr. Millan: The purpose of these amendments is to take statutory sick pay out of the list of items which are included in earnings for arrestment purposes and put it into the list of items which are not to be treated as earnings in the arrestment arrangements. Again I am obliged to the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux for pointing this out, because I missed it on reading the Bill initially.

I find it odd that statutory sick pay, which is like a social security benefit, should be included in the determination of earnings for arrestment purposes. Under the clause, other pensions, allowances or benefits payable under social security legislation are excluded. In those circumstances I do not understand why statutory sick pay should be included. In fairness, statutory sick pay should be excluded. I hope the Solicitor-General will agree to statutory sick pay being transferred to the category of items which are not to be included as earnings for arrestment purposes.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Hon. Members will be aware that the Bill makes a deliberate and careful distinction between payments—pensions, allowances and benefits — made under social security legislation and statutory sick pay. Payments under social security legislation are expressly provided to be not equivalent to earnings. Such payments are therefore quite rightly not taken into account in the Bill's provisions about which deductions are to be made under an earnings arrestment from weekly or monthly earnings.

On the other hand, statutory sick pay is payable in replacement of earnings when an employee is sick. It is therefore entirely reasonable and logical that what an employee receives from his employer, whether as earned wages or statutory sick pay, should be treated as earnings for the purposes of the Bill's provisions. That was the intention of the Scottish Law Commission, which it expressed in paragraph 6.36 of its report. The provisions simply bring Scotland into line with England and Wales.

In 1985 the relevant English legislation about attachment of earnings was amended by the Social Security Act 1985. This House and the other House have accepted the principle that statutory sick pay is to be equated with earnings. For that reason it is difficult to see why the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) foresees any distinction being brought about between Scotland and the rest of the country.

The system that we have is designed to safeguard the interests of the debtor and creditor by ensuring that regular payments are made to the creditor to reduce the debt. The regular instalments are of an amount which the debtor can be reasonably expected to contribute. This scheme would be disrupted if, in a week in which the employee was sick, no deductions from his earnings were to be made. It would produce quite unnecessary complications for the employer—who must operate the arrestments—and the employee. The disruption in the smooth running of earnings arrestment is not necessary or justifiable on the ground of principle. The right hon. Member for Govan probably is aware that the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux has made that point.

What should be made clear is that if deductions are to be made from statutory sick pay they should be on the basis of the net earnings as set out in the schedule to the Bill. The amount of deduction would not continue at the rate appropriate to the wages received prior the period of sickness.

As the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate, it is not just statutory sick pay arrangements that are made; certain additional sick pay arrangements are also made. If what the right hon. Member suggested were to be incorporated in the Bill it would leave the employer in the extremely complicated position of trying to work out exactly what was to be included in earnings, from which a deduction could be made, and what was to be excluded.

On that basis I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Kirkwood: I rise because I was not quick enough to catch the eye of Solicitor-General for Scotland. Am I right in assuming that the new statutory maternity pay would come under the social security legislation, to which he adverted, and therefore would be exempt? That is a detailed point, so if he cannot answer it now I should like some assurance at a later date.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I cannot be certain on this point. If the hon. Gentleman wants me to pursue it, I shall write to him.

Mr. Millan: I am not convinced by the argument of the Solicitor-General for Scotland. I did not mention any distinction between Scotland and England; I was not aware that there was a difference. The argument that Scotland must be brought into line with England for consistency reasons is an unattractive one. It persuades me that my amendment is a good one.

Statutory sick pay is what would otherwise be a national insurance benefit. The Solicitor-General for Scotland shakes his head, but that is what it is. It puts a certain obligation on the employer in circumstances where previously national insurance benefits were paid. It should be included, analagously, with national insurance benefits in the items which are excluded from the definition of earnings for the purposes of this clause. I am not persuaded by the argument of the Solicitor-General for Scotland and I feel disposed to take this to a Division.

Amendment negatived.

6.15 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I must apologise to the House because I omitted to deal with amendment No. 13. Will the Solicitor-General for Scotland please move it formally?

Amendment made: No. 13, in clause 51, page 40, line 28, at end insert 'or abandoned by the creditor.'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 101

ADJUDICATION FOR DEBT

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, amendment No. 17, in page 73, line 41, after first 'debt', insert

'(other than an auction under section 23(5) of the Conveyancing (Scotland) Act 1924)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 18.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: This is a highly technical amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 73, line 43, at end insert—

'*(aa)* the debt is a debitum fundi; or'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

6.18 pm

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I should like to thank right hon. and hon. Members for the general welcome that they have given the Bill. The welcome was not as unqualified as we might have wished, but nevertheless it ensured that consideration of the Bill both here and in Committee proceeded in a constructive manner.

As I mentioned in Committee, the Bill was dealt with expeditiously, but that did not prevent us giving a good airing to the main points at issue. I am grateful to my hon. Friends for their contributions and particularly to the Scottish Law Commission. It was a long time in gestation of these proposals, but now that we have concluded consideration of them, I am sure that in Scotland it will be considered that its deliberations and our own have been worthwhile in bringing about a reform of this part of the private law of Scotland which has been long awaited. Much of the humiliation and embarrassment that has been at the centre of attention in recent years as a result of warrant sales will be part of our history and not part of our present practice.

6.19 pm

Mr. MacKenzie: It would be churlish and ungracious of me not to acknowledge that the Bill is a substantial improvement on the present system. Although I have a number of serious reservations about it, I welcome the Bill and I hope that it will become an Act in the fulness of time. As the Solicitor-General for Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) know, we have been opposed to the present system for many years. It is humiliating to ordinary people and is fair neither to debtor nor creditor. We still have some substantial reservations about it and about debt arrangements. We hope that the Solicitor-General will keep an open mind on that.

We have serious reservations on the whole question of whether warrant sales should still continue. Over the past few weeks the Solicitor-General has tweaked our tails by asking what we have in mind to put in its place. If he pressed me too hard I would have to say that I would go and ask my noble and learned Friend the Lord Morton of Shuna. That is the best answer I can think of at the moment.

The only other reservation I have is a purely personal one. The only private Member's Bill that I have got through the House in the past 23 years is now being repealed by this Bill, which I welcome. I will not have my name on the statute book ever again but, that apart, I give a general welcome to the Bill.

6.21 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke: I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) who was extremely helpful throughout our proceedings on the Bill, as was my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). I would also like to thank my other hon. Friends for the contribution they have made to our constructive response to the Government's Bill.

We said on Second Reading that we welcome the Bill, and we do. In Committee we attempted to offer some constructive suggestions and we regret that the Solicitor-General for Scotland did not find it possible to accept all our proposals. Nevertheless, it would be churlish not to acknowledge that the Bill is a progressive measure. We would, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, have acted differently on matters such as medical aid. I will not go any further on that because I am worried about his blood pressure. We might even have gone further on the arrangements which the Law Commission suggested about multiple debt. We would have gone much further on many other aspects of the recommendations of the Law Commission. We still feel a repugnance about having any sales at all in a household.

However, that said, there is no doubt that, given some of the scars of the past and some of the social stigmas which were inflicted upon families and upon communities, the Bill as it now stands does represent progress. For our part we shall represent our views as the Bill is enacted and we shall monitor the legislation. We regard it as an extremely helpful Bill and we have said so at each stage of its consideration. We also feel—this should be put on record — that it represents a framework for future legislation. I look forward to the Labour Government that we can expect in the not too distant future, as readers of *The Guardian* will have noted this morning. When that day

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

comes we shall be well on our way towards the abolition of warrant sales, which Opposition Members see as the ultimate and urgent objective.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Pilotage Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

MEANING OF "COMPETENT HARBOUR AUTHORITY" AND "HARBOUR"

6.23 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 15, after 'and', insert 'subject to subsection (1A) below,'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 2, in page 1, line 19, at end insert—

'(1A) Where any part of a harbour authority's harbour is contiguous to an area which (apart from this subsection) is not within its harbour or the harbour of any other competent harbour authority but which is within an active former pilotage district, any reference in this Act to the authority's harbour or its approaches shall, subject to any order made under subsection (3) below, include a reference to that area; and where by virtue of this subsection an area is included in the harbour of more than one harbour authority, those authorities shall exercise their pilotage functions in relation to that area jointly.'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 11, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) If the Secretary of State considers that it is not necessary in the interests of efficiency and safety of navigation:

(a) that a competent harbour authority should exercise pilotage functions as respects any area or part of any area which is included in its harbour by virtue of subsection (1A) above, he may by order exclude that area or part from the area of its harbour; or

(b) for a competent harbour authority to exercise pilotage functions as respects its harbour, he may by order provide that that authority shall cease to be a competent harbour authority for the purposes of this Act;

and the Secretary of State may in any case where he considers that it is necessary in the interests of efficiency and safety of navigation that a competent harbour authority should exercise pilotage functions as respects any harbour authority's harbour he may by order provide that this Act shall apply to that competent harbour authority as if its harbour included that other harbour.'.

No. 45, in clause 12, page 11, line 5, after *'(a)'* insert 'apart from section 1(1A) above,'.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Clause 1 ensures that responsibility for considering pilotage requirements is placed on the appropriate harbour authorities. The clause empowers the Secretary of State, where there are likely to be overlapping or conflicting jurisdictions between different harbour authorities, to provide by order that designated harbour authorities should exercise functions that would otherwise be enjoyed by another harbour authority.

As the Bill stands, the present pilotage limits will be drawn solely by reference to the relevant harbour limits. That will mean a fragmented pilotage service in the Thames estuary. This is especially relevant to the maintenance of maritime safety as it will leave areas of hazardous waters outside the proposed limits for compulsory pilotage.

As we all know, the Thames estuary is an area of comparatively shallow water, heavily used by all sorts of

traffic such as chemical carriers, container ships, super-tankers and passenger ferries at the mouth of the Thames just 10 miles off shore. That ought not to be left to commercial considerations alone. In order to reach the oil wharves on the tide, deep-draughted tankers drawing up to 45 ft and carrying 100,000 tonnes of oil must negotiate the area south of the Trinity buoy at low water with only 4 ft under-keel clearance. The bottom there is notoriously unstable and subject to mud waves. The navigable channel is only about half a mile wide at best and requires a constant update of knowledge. There is no discernible radar picture and it is just 12 miles off the Essex coast, being some 15 miles seaward of the Port of London authority limit.

Do the Government really consider that the pilotage can be safely withdrawn from that area, which is very busy and close to the population centres around Margate and the north Kent coast as well as Essex? It is also a well-used fishing ground.

Immediately north of the Sunk and 10 miles beyond the Harwich harbour board limit in the approach channel to the Haven ports of Ipswich, Harwich and Felixstowe. Ships of up to 13 m draught have to navigate there, dependent on the rise of the tide, with just 1 m under-keel clearance in a channel half a mile wide in a cross tide to the busiest port in the United Kingdom. All in all, that, arguably the busiest stretch of water off our shores, is a somewhat hazardous area in which to navigate. Yet, in the proposed legislation, it falls into no man's land.

The sea is an unforgiving element, as we have learned just recently to our cost in the tragic ferry disaster. We must not take unnecessary risks. That is why the amendments to clause 1 will maintain the present pilotage limits allowing competent harbour authorities to reduce pilotage limit only upon application to the Secretary of State. That will give effect to the Select Committee's recommendation that initially harbour authorities should take over responsibility for pilotage districts as they presently exist, and harbour authorities which consider that the pilotage districts may be safely reduced should have to seek parliamentary approval.

Clause 12 deals with joint arrangements. The amendment to the clause is consequential to the new inserted subsection of clause 1(1A). It ensures that any provision for joint arrangements made under clause 12 does not affect the mandatory requirement for joint arrangements under clause 1.

I hope, in the interests of safety alone, that the Minister will pay attention to the amendments I have moved, and that he will accept them.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I want to intervene on a point of legality to find out whether the competent harbour authorities are to include the Queen's harbourmasters. It seems that there may be a difference of opinion here because in my part of southern England there are four competent harbour authorities but there is also a Queen's harbourmaster.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to ask the Minister a question about the clause, with which I have a great deal of sympathy. My question concerns the Minches. If the clause were agreed to, would the Stornoway authority be the competent harbour authority? What kind of authority would it exercise over the passage of what I believe are called the ULCCs, which go down through those waters from Sullom Voe in Shetland? I accept what the pilots have told me—that it is a safe area through which to navigate huge ships.

6.30 pm

However, I am not sure whether ships with draughts of up to 80 ft can safely navigate the passage. Speaking as a layman with no navigational expertise, I recall a large stern trawler from Hull—a ship that is very much smaller than a tanker—going aground in the Minches when fishing for mackerel some years ago. Despite the reassurances that have been offered by the pilots, those tankers should be directed to the west of Lewis and the Western Isles when they are proceeding to and from Sullom Voe. If the clause were accepted, would the Stornoway harbour authority become the competent harbour authority for the Minches?

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): I wish to join my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) in expressing some doubt about the clause. I support his amendments. The question of harbour limits is a crucial one in my part of the world. The Gloucester port is slightly outside my constituency, but Sharpness is in it. The pilots go aboard to bring vessels to those two ports way down the Welsh coast at Barry, which is many miles away.

As everyone knows, the Severn is a notoriously difficult river. It frequently shifts its channel, has the highest tides in the United Kingdom—almost in the world—and is a tricky business. It is not clear from the arrangements that are outlined in the Bill which harbour authority will be responsible for it. There are three candidates: the Gloucester harbour trustees, the Sharpness board or the British Waterways board. I understand from a letter that I have received from my noble Friend Lord Brabazon of Tara, who introduced the Bill in the other place, that those authorities will have to sort that matter out among themselves.

There is an element of vagueness about the arrangements which is undesirable in so difficult and dangerous a channel, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can tell us which authority will be responsible and what its duties will be. I hope that he will be able to set at rest our anxieties about pilotage in the area.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesend): I wish to support the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale), which have a vital part to play in pilotage in the outer reaches of the Thames. My hon. Friend has explained the technicalities, so I shall not dwell on them. The Minister well knows my reservations about the Bill, which seems to represent a piecemeal approach to the problem. As I understand it, responsibility will ultimately be given to the Port of London Authority, a body in which I do not have complete faith. In a letter to me, the Minister mentioned that it had undergone a sea change. That was a somewhat Freudian remark. Will the Minister accept the amendment so that that sea change can also be a safe change?

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I have great sympathy with the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale), and I await the Minister's answers with great interest. Many of us will attach great significance to those answers. I hope that the Minister will understand that it is not enough to give us a generalised answer; we need a specific assurance that he

[Mr. Roger Moate]

and his colleagues have grasped the safety aspect of what we are saying. We are entitled to a clear assurance about some of the hazardous areas from which compulsory pilotage has been withdrawn, and we need to know that the Minister is satisfied that the safety of those at sea is not being endangered. That is the point that has been put to us by pilots. I suspect that my hon. Friends, too, have been approached by pilots and persuaded of the importance of the case.

The Bill proposes that certain areas shall have compulsory pilotage withdrawn from them, and that the limits will be reduced back to the areas of the harbour authorities. Thereafter, the harbour authorities may apply for the limits to be extended, but an appeal can be made against such an application. The Goodwin sands, the north foreland of Kent, the Trinity buoy area and the Thames estuarial area are self-evidently hazardous places, and that is why they were included in the pilotage districts before. The Minister says that it is unnecessary to have compulsory pilotage in those areas, and that the matter should be left to the judgment of the new competent harbour authorities.

I am certainly one of those hon. Members who needs persuading that it is right, in the interests of safety, to make this withdrawal of compulsory pilotage. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister has some convincing explanations if he intends to oppose the amendment. I hope that he will give us some assurance, perhaps even in the form of accepting the proposals.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Anyone who knows the Mersey knows that, in the past, we have had a number of harbour authorities. We had the Mersey docks and harbours board in my day. Then there were the Manchester ship canal, the Manchester docks and so on. The harbour authorities of Liverpool, Manchester and Garston have made an effort to provide the means whereby the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company could, if required, exercise pilotage functions on their behalf.

As no commitment has been given, I want to know whether the Government's view is that that can be agreed. At the moment the matter is up in the air, and I do not know what is happening. If the changes are to come about, we should know precisely what is happening, what harbour authorities are likely to take over and what the special problems in certain areas will be. I am not an expert on pilotage, unlike the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thompson), who is a much greater expert than I, because he was a Mersey pilot and understands the business thoroughly. He worked on the river for years; I worked only on the boats that were tied up. We need an answer to this question about what is happening, and whether the best arrangements are being made.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I wish to add my voice to that of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) who, I am delighted to hear, did some work in Liverpool at some stage of his career. What concerns me is that the Minister will tell us whether commercial or safety interests are to be paramount. That is what the amendment is about. The pilots on the River Mersey have said, both to my right hon. Friend and others, that they fear that the competent harbour authority might pay more attention to commercial interests than safety interests.

I trust that the Minister will reassure us that safety will be the paramount consideration and that commercial interests will take second place.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): The hon. Members for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) and for Faversham (Mr. Moate) spoke about safety, and I suspect that "safety" will be the key word throughout our debates. It is important that we have safety in the forefront of our minds when we talk about pilotage, and it must not be overridden by commercial considerations.

The hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) has introduced an interesting amendment which highlights the problem of overlapping competent harbour authorities in areas that are dangerous for shipping. I listened to the hon. Gentleman with care when he spoke about the Trinity buoy. At low water there is only 4 ft of under-keel clearance. The sea bottom is notoriously unstable and subject to sand waves, the channel is not easily navigable by radar and it is only 10 miles away from the Essex coast. The Thames estuary and the east coast ports of Felixtowe and Harwich are areas of great activity. There is a great deal of continental traffic and there are many ferries and ro-ro vessels. It is a hive of activity. We must know who is to be responsible for the safe navigation of these waters and which harbour authority will have that responsibility. Emphasis must be placed upon the safe navigation of our waters around the United Kingdom and where pilotage is necessary, pilotage must be provided.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): There is no dispute about safety being paramount, and the Bill places an absolute obligation on ensuring safety. Competent harbour authorities will be subject to the responsibilities and duties that are set out in clause 2. The only matter for debate is where responsibility lies for safety — in other words, where does the buck stop? It has been difficult in the past to determine where the buck stops, and this has had a bearing on the number of pilots that have been required. It has been a matter of great debate within the industry over many years, and it has addressed itself constantly to the sort of pilotage that is required and the number of pilots that are needed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) spoke about the Queen's harbourmasters. They will not be competent harbour authorities. There are provisions in clauses 12 and 13 for determining the relationships between them and the competent authorities. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) asked about the problems that might be associated with the Manchester and Mersey docks. We hope that agreement will be reached on sensible proposals for the estuary. If that is not possible, clause 12 allows the Secretary of State to call for information that will enable him to make satisfactory arrangements. We hope that there can be voluntary agreement.

Mr. Porter: We are dealing with a complex Bill that contains many clauses, and one gathers that we shall be doing so for two or three hours. My hon. Friends the Members for Harwich and for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and I are being told that it is hoped that satisfactory arrangements will be made, but the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has asked for specific

assurances. We want to know what is to happen, and so do pilots. The response of my hon. Friend the Minister is hardly satisfactory.

Mr. Spicer: Where there are overlapping responsibilities between competent harbour authorities as defined in the Bill, the authorities will get together and make arrangements for pilotage. If it is found that it is not possible voluntarily to make such arrangements, there are powers in the Bill for the Secretary of State to intervene. I have to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw) that there is a problem about Gloucester and Sharpness. I shall be introducing an amendment to enable the Secretary of State to deal with problems of passage.

Mr. Heffer: I think that there is an agreement already between the harbour authorities in the area which I represent in part that will result in a Mersey docks company. In the past there was a tremendous number of ships on the Mersey and a considerable number of pilots were required. The comparison between Merseyside then and now is a tragic one. Those of us who come from Merseyside feel ill every time we look at the river. There is nothing much moving on it but there is still some activity. Some pilots will be needed but there will be others who will not be required. Who will be responsible for paying off the pilots who are not needed? From where will the money come? I want a firm assurance from the Minister. Will the new authorities have to find the money, or will they be given special assistance by the Government to help them overcome the problem?

6.45 pm

Mr. Spicer: It seems that we are embarking on a Second Reading debate. We shall be dealing with the details of compensation arrangements and who will pay. The short answer is that the ports will pay. We shall deal with the details of the compensation arrangements as we proceed with our consideration of the Bill.

Mr. Heffer: There are areas that have special problems because of their history and it is not good enough to say "the ports". There are real problems and the Government should have a responsibility to help the ports to deal with them. If there is a good answer set out in the Bill, I shall be prepared to accept it, but I am not satisfied with the Minister's response so far.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to ask questions and as we continue to discuss the Bill he will receive detailed answers. If I may say so, he is asking questions which are related more directly to other amendments.

The present system of compulsory pilotage is limited. In the London district, for example, compulsory pilotage applies only to ships going to and from ports in London districts. Vessels going through the district are not required to take pilots. I discovered this when I visited the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale). It is possible for vessels making their way to Ipswich not to take on a pilot as they pass Harwich. We must not run away with the idea that the present system is all-embracing, and that we are ruining it through the Bill.

The amendments assume that the justifications of the boundaries of the pilotage districts remain valid, although they were drawn up at the turn of the century or, in some cases, earlier. But it must be recognised that conditions have changed dramatically since then. Patterns of trade, shipping movements and the available navigational equipment, for instance, have altered beyond recognition.

I have two further objections to the amendments. First, they would give the Secretary of State responsibility for setting the limits of pilotage, whereas one of the prime purposes of the Bill — I appreciate that this is a controversial matter — is that they should be locally determined. Secondly, they would require the competent harbour authorities to operate jointly in the outer pilotage areas. In some areas, that would be an unecessary administrative complication. Surely it would be better to leave the local competent harbour authorities to decide the best arrangements in their local circumstances.

We believe that the sensible way forward is to allow the competent harbour authorities to consider the pilotage needs of their ports afresh in the light of modern conditions, without being constrained by a structure that grew up in wholly different circumstances.

Mr. Brinton: My hon. Friend has made much of the Government's desire to pass on the final and ultimate decision to the local authorities concerned. How does he square that with the Secretary of State's remarks in the House on 9 March? My right hon. Friend said:

> "Safety cannot be inhibited by any pressures. It is the first prerequisite, and all hon Members would expect it to be the prerequisite of any Government, to establish regulations on safety at sea."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 23.]

My right hon. Friend was saying that safety was the Government's responsibility. Should not the Government therefore take responsibility for it in the Bill?

Mr. Spicer: The Government are taking the responsibility of hoping to obtain the agreement of Parliament to the Bill. We believe that the people who know the local conditions in the approaches to the quayside are the right people to determine the number of pilots that will allow for the safest possible conduct of shipping within their authorities. I know that that is a matter for debate, but it is precisely because the Government believe that the local competent harbour authorities are best able to determine the safe number of pilots that we are trying to persuade the House to accept the Bill.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) talked about Stornoway. Stornoway is not a competent harbour authority, because it is not at present an active pilotage district. However, if it wishes to become so, under the terms of the Bill, it can apply for an order.

Mr. Moate: I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would answer a specific question. He tells us that conditions have changed since the pilotage districts were first established. Does that mean that some body or authority has made a scientific reassessment of pilotage needs? In the case of the Thames estuary, for example, has some body decided that there is no longer a prima facie need for compulsory pilotage from the Goodwin sands? Or does my hon. Friend mean that an arbitrary decision has been made, and that hopefully we shall eventually claw our way back to common sense when the needs of the area have been established? If there has been a reassessment, is not my hon. Friend obliged to place the evidence on safety before the House before asking us to reduce the pilotage areas?

Mr. Spicer: I am informed that the London pilots accept that there is no need for the Goodwin sands to be covered by compulsory pilotage.

Dr. Godman: The Minister answered my question about Stornoway. If the authorities in Stornoway were to apply successfully for CHA status, would they then have control over navigation through the Minches?

Mr. Spicer: The competent harbour authority would not necessarily have navigation control, unless it asked for the appropriate orders. If it did so, it could then take control if it felt that that was part of the CHA's responsibility under the Act, which is to ensure safe passage not only within their areas, but in the approaches to their harbours.

That partly answers my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate); however, let me reply to his question about how the competent harbour authorities were originally designated. The definition of such authorities arose out of a number of byelaws and historical precedents. There is discretion for those who know what part of the competent harbour area they can designate for compulsory pilotage. If, knowing the local conditions, they are not satisfied about the harbour limits, it is open to them to extend those limits.

I hope that, even if I have not answered all the questions to everyone's satisfaction, I have at least addressed the points that have been made. I ask the Committee not to accept the amendments.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I have had to weigh carefully in my mind the paramount importance of safety. When such a change is made, I feel that safety must overrule what my hon. Friend the Minister has been saying. He has not convinced me, and I have a feeling that he has not convinced many of my hon. Friends. I only wish that he had been able to do so.

I would emphasise that the matter was considered by the Select Committee on Transport, which recommended that initially harbour authorities should take over responsibility for pilotage districts as they now exist. My view, therefore, is backed up by the Select Committee. Bearing in mind the dangers of the approaches to the Thames estuary——

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) and others have underlined the fundamental flaw in the Bill. The Secretary of State, on behalf of the Government, is handing over totally, the responsibility for compulsory pilotage in the waters around this country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) pointed out, that is to be done without any assessment of whether safety measures have been examined or brought up to date. The point does not concern the number of pilots; it goes to the core of the safety argument. We have heard nothing this evening that convinces us—convinces me, at any rate—that anything has been done that should relieve the Government of the ultimate responsibility for ensuring safety. It is not sufficient to hand over that responsibility to CHAs. I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to address his closing remarks to the question of who polices the policemen. We are giving the responsibility to the CHAs, and the Government will have no responsibility for seeing what they do thereafter.

7 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). I agree with him. In view of his experience as a pilot and because I have talked to pilots who know what the waters are like in the Thames estuary, I cannot withdraw the amendment. I must push it to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The Committee divided: Ayes 32, Noes 76.

Division No. 142] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald	Madden, Max
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Meadowcroft, Michael
Beith, A. J.	Moate, Roger
Bermingham, Gerald	Pike, Peter
Brinton, Tim	Porter, Barry
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Monty)*	Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Godman, Dr Norman	Skinner, Dennis
Golding, Mrs Llin	Spearing, Nigel
Gould, Bryan	Steel, Rt Hon David
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*	Stott, Roger
Haynes, Frank	Taylor, Matthew
Heffer, Eric S.	Trotter, Neville
Howells, Geraint	Wallace, James
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*	
Kennedy, Charles	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kirkwood, Archy	Sir Julian Ridsdale and
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*	Mr. Malcolm Thornton.

NOES

Ancram, Michael	Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Bellingham, Henry	Knowles, Michael
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Lawrence, Ivan
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Bottomley, Peter	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Bright, Graham	McCrindle, Robert
Browne, John	Malone, Gerald
Bruinvels, Peter	Marlow, Antony
Bryan, Sir Paul	Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Burt, Alistair	Moynihan, Hon C.
Butterfill, John	Neubert, Michael
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Norris, Steven
Colvin, Michael	Onslow, Cranley
Cope, John	Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Couchman, James	Portillo, Michael
Dickens, Geoffrey	Powley, John
Eyre, Sir Reginald	Rathbone, Tim
Fallon, Michael	Rossi, Sir Hugh
Favell, Anthony	Sackville, Hon Thomas
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey	Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Forth, Eric	Spencer, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus	Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Galley, Roy	Stanbrook, Ivor
Greenway, Harry	Stern, Michael
Gregory, Conal	Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*	Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Hampson, Dr Keith	Twinn, Dr Ian
Hargreaves, Kenneth	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Harris, David	Waller, Gary
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*	Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Heddle, John	Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Hind, Kenneth	Wheeler, John
Hordern, Sir Peter	Wiggin, Jerry
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Wilkinson, John
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*	
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Jackson, Robert	Mr. David Lightbown and
Jessel, Toby	Mr. Richard Ryder.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 3, leave out 'or 1986' and insert '1986 or 1987'.

This is a constituency-based amendment. At the present time, Scalloway, in the Shetland Isles, is not within a pilotage area although pilotage operations take place. It is the will of the harbour authority — the Shetland Islands council — that Scalloway be formally made a pilotage area. If it had to wait until after the Bill becomes law, it would be unable to license those persons who presently carry out the pilot duties — albeit on a part-time basis — but would be bound by the four-year period from the appointed day.

It has been suggested that a pilotage order could be promoted prior to the appointed day and that has much to commend it. It was originally suggested by the noble Lord Brabazon that Scalloway should be included as part of the Sullom Voe district. With respect to the noble Lord, I must point out that Scalloway is on the west coast and Sullom Voe is on the east coast, so perhaps, geographically, that is not the most sensible solution.

If a pilotage order was promoted, there is a possible difficulty — that the Bill as it stands does not make provision for an act of pilotage in the present calendar year, 1987. Obviously, if a pilotage order was to be promoted and passed and if the district was to be an active district as defined in the Bill, the only time that would be available for an act of pilotage to be made and in respect of which a return could be made, would be in the year 1987.

It is for that reason that this simple amendment is made to extend, by one further calendar year, the years in which returns can be made in respect of acts of pilotage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised that our lawyers do not think that this amendment is strictly necessary to achieve what is desired by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) — to have Scalloway made an active pilotage district. However, we accept his point, and to make things clear we are prepared to accept the amendment.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the Minister. May I take this opportunity to say how grateful the officials of the Orkney Islands council and the Shetland Islands council, and myself, have been for the co-operation they have received from the officials at the Department of Transport.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1, as amended ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

Authorisation and Employment of Pilots

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 4, line 15, after 'period', insert 'which are not renewable'.

Liverpool pilots have been concerned that their licences, which are renewed annually, may be taken to be licences for a limited period. If that was so, they would lose the priority that former licensed pilots are given by the Bill in relation to authorisations during the first four years after its implementation. This amendment makes it clear that it is only provisional pilots, whose licences are issued for a limited period and are not renewable, as are Liverpool pilots' licences, who will be excluded from the priority provisions.

Amendment agreed to.

7.15 pm

Mr. Thornton: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 4, line 33, leave out paragraphs *(c)* and *(d)*.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendments Nos. 8 and 9.

Amendment No. 20, in page 4, line 40, leave out '*(a)*'.

Government amendment No. 11.

Amendment No. 12, in page 4, line 43, at end insert —

'( ) An authorised person who has made representations under subsection (6) above and who remains aggrieved by a decision of a competent harbour authority to suspend or revoke an authorisation under subsection (5) above may appeal to the Secretary of State who may, if he sees fit, direct the competent harbour authority to withdraw the suspension or revocation and the competent harbour authority shall comply with any such direction.'.

Government amendment No. 13.

Mr. Thornton: The introduction to the White Paper tells us, amongst other things:

"The Green Paper proposed that under the new regime the administration of pilotage should be greatly simplified."

It also states:

"In recent years there has been growing concern about the cost of using British ports, in particular compared with those on the continent, and the Government is anxious to seek ways of helping to reduce the costs. One element in a port's costs is the cost of the pilotage service. This has meant that the cost of pilotage is often greater than it need be."

The Bill does a great deal to achieve those objectives, but it still contains much that is not needed to achieve those objectives, including the two paragraphs I have quoted. In an age when we are trying to reduce bureaucracy — its existence is dependent upon regulations and laws — we can only be successful if legislation is kept to a minimum. With regard to the two paragraphs, the test to determine whether they are necessary is not so simple.

First, is the intention of the paragraphs met by other legislation or by other self-regulating means? Secondly, are they necessary to reduce costs? I suggest that the answer to the first question is yes, but the answer to the second is no. Before I demonstrate that to be so, I should like to make a general point. Those two paragraphs will give competent harbour authorities unfettered power over pilots. They will be able to exercise that power at will without challenge as to whether, in the exercise of it, they have had due regard, among other things, to natural justice. They will be able to remove a man's livelihood — for whatever reason — without being accountable to anyone. They will be able to exercise the power in a discriminatory manner.

Bearing in mind the wide terms in which subsection *(5)(c)* is drafted — that it is the competent harbour authority alone which will decide the number of persons required to be authorised — the criteria for such a determination will be the authority's and the authority's alone. Therefore, that determination is capable of variation at will. An authority will be able to use such power in a discriminatory manner. It could, for example, revoke the authorisation of a pilot, who, in fulfilling his functions by virtue of section 742 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 —

[Mr. Thornton]

"'Pilot' means any person not belonging to a ship who has the conduct thereof"—

has, in the commercial judgment of the competent harbour authority, acted in too prudent a manner. However, according to Captain Lecky—considered by professional seamen to be the unquestioned authority in such matters—prudence is the very essence and quality required of those making executive decisions in ship handling, namely, pilots.

That is a general, but important point. The existence of those two paragraphs that I have quoted will undoubtedly inhibite a pilot from having proper regard to the non-commercial, wider responsibilities of his functions—the public officer element of his responsibilities. I referred to that on Second Reading and to the report produced by the Canadian commission that referred to pilots as "environmental protection officers".

In the more specific tests to be applied, regard has to be had to the employed and self-employed options that the Bill provides for the continuing pilots. Taking the employed option first, clause 4(2) provides:

"A competent harbour authority shall offer to employ under a contract of employment any person it authorises under section 3 above".

Prima facie, it appears that provided a person is authorised as a pilot, the competent harbour authority has to offer that person a contract of employment, and, provided that he is authorised, his contract of employment stands. But is that really the case?

Section 54 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 says, among other things:

"(1) In every employment to which this section applies every employee shall have the right not to be unfairly dismissed by his employer."

Of course, the corollary to that is that every employer has the right to dismiss any employee fairly. That is spelt out in section 57 of the 1978 Act. Surely the fact that the employer has no work and that therefore the employee is redundant falls under that head. That is what the paragraph is all about.

As the legislation places no requirement on the length of time for which an authorisation has to remain in force, clearly such authorisation can be revoked at the same time as the contract of employment is terminated. In the case of employed pilots, these two subsections are unnecessary, unless it is the aim of Government, with respect to employed pilots, to circumvent the provisions of the 1978 Act.

Despite the noble Lord Brabazon's protestations to the contrary, pilots believe this to be a strong possibility. That is because these two paragraphs appear to conflict with sections 49 and 50 of the 1978 Act. They give the rights to provide an employee with a minimum period of notice before a contract of employment is terminated and, when taken in conjunction with subsection (6) of this clause, the right to circumvent section 53 of that Act, which requires written notice to be provided. If that is the case, it gives the lie to the repeated statements by individual Ministers and by the Government that continuing pilots will be fairly and equitably treated. That is a source of considerable anxiety to pilots throughout Britain.

In Committee in the other place the Minister, Lord Brabazon said:

"nothing in the clause affects the operation of employment protection legislation and a pilot who is employed whether by a CHA or anyone else, and whose authorisation i s revoked will remain eligible for the same rights and protection from that legislation as any other employed person."—[*Official Report, House of Lords, Public Bill Committee*, 9 December 1986; c. 38.]

On Report in the other place that positive statement was somewhat diluted. At that time Lord Brabazon said:

"and I made it clear that in our view a pilot's rights in such matters as employment protection should be attached to his contract of employment or other agreement under which he carries out pilotage for the CHA."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 February 1987; Vol. 484, c. 774.]

Frankly, the Government statement, "in our view", is just not good enough. I should like to know from the Minister whether these paragraphs are subordinate to the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978. If they are, they are unnecessary. If not, then the pilots have been misled. A definitive answer is required. What happens if a competent harbour authority refuses to attach such rights, whatever they may be, to the contract of employment?

I shall now deal with the matter of pilots who decide not to accept a contract of employment with a competent harbour authority and who, in all likelihood, will be self-employed. In this case I submit that these two paragraphs are equally unnecessary. It is acknowledged that employment protection legislation is irrelevant to the self-employed and probably also to the agency scenario. Therefore, the justification for the inclusion of these two paragraphs must rest on costs, but the implementation of their intent will not reduce costs.

Mr. Porter: I am following my hon. Friend's complicated argument. Is he saying that there is some doubt whether employed pilots have the protection of normal employment and redundancy legislation? Surely that cannot be right. Of course they have, and is that not indicated in the Bill?

Mr. Thornton: That is the point that I am asking the Minister to clarify. Certainly, on a reading of *Hansard* from the other place, and especially on Report, the words "in our view" seem to dilute the absolute statement that was made earlier. I seek an assurance from the Minister that that is not so.

All pilotage revenue will be controlled by a competent harbour authority. In the case of an agency arrangement, the competent harbour authority will presumably negotiate the provision of pilotage services on a fixed-price annual lump sum arrangement and, in the case of the self-employed, on a per ship basis. In effect, always provided that the number of persons authorised is sufficient to do the work, in terms of costs it is immaterial whether there are more persons than are strictly necessary because the costs will remain the same. Indeed, it could be argued that it would be in a competent harbour authority's interests for more persons to be authorised than are strictly necessary, as the service would then be able more readily to cope with unexpected peak demands. Anyone who knows anything about shipping knows that such demands are by no means unusual.

For the reasons stated, it is clear that neither of these two paragraphs is necessary for either the employed or the self-employed agency regimes. They are unnecessary regulations and should be removed.

I shall now turn to amendment No. 20. The Bill as drafted requires a competent harbour authority to give written notice of its intention to suspend or revoke authorisation only

"if it appears to it that the authorised person has been guilty of any incompetence or misconduct affecting his capability as a pilot".

In speaking to the first amendment, I explained how subsections (5)*(c)* and *(d)* give unfettered power to competent harbour authorities, which could, if they wished, use it in a capricious and discriminatory manner. Those paragraphs are written in terms that are wide enough to steer a large carrier through — wider than some of the channels in many of our ports. The same applies to subsection (5)*(b)* which says that an authorisation may be suspended or revoked when a person ceases or fails

"to provide evidence that he continues to have"

the qualifications required.

What are those qualifications? Clause 3(2) tells us:

"The authority may determine the qualifications in respect of age, physical fitness, time of service, local knowledge, skill, character and otherwise to be required".

It does not say what those qualifications have to be or whether they will be fixed. For that reason, they can be varied from time to time by the competent harbour authority. What is the determinant of the qualifications in respect of character? What does "otherwise" mean? What criteria will be used to determine the degree of physical fitness that is required? Will it be the length of time taken to climb a 30-ft pilot ladder when the ship is rolling in heavy seas? All these maters are capable of wide interpretation and, therefore, capable of discrimination. There could be no objection to the Government amendment if all competent harbour authorities were to exercise their powers in such matters in a responsible, fair and just manner. This amendment would only give those pilots who elect for the self-employed option the same rights as those who accept a contract of employment.

7.30 pm

This statement is made against the background of the fact that in Committee in the House of Lords the Minister stated quite categorically that pilots accepting contracts of employment would enjoy all the rights and benefits afforded by the employment protection legislation, just like any other employee. That being so, all employed pilots will, by virtue of section 53 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, be entitled to reasons, in writing, why their contract of employment is to be terminated. That must follow revocation of an authorisation as surely as Might follows day.

Therefore, it can be argued that, as drafted, the subsection is in conflict with section 53 of the 1978 Act. This amendment seeks only to extend that provision to those who opt for self-employment. However, it will not be sufficient for the written notice to say that the contract of employment is being terminated as a consequence of the revocation of the authorisation. I hope that the Minister will assure us on that point today. If he cannot, it will be clear that this subsection has been drafted to enable CHAs to circumvent section 53 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act to the detriment of their prospective employees.

Finally, I turn to amendment No. 12. On the clear understanding that the provisions of the 1978 Act apply in full to pilots accepting contracts of employment from competent harbour authorities, especially that a written statement by an employer that an authorisation has been revoked will not be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of section 53 of that Act, and that the reasons for the revocation of that authorisation must also be given — which, it can be argued, will in any case be necessary to satisfy section 57(3) of that Act — this amendment is necessary to ensure the equitable treatment of those pilots not accepting contracts of employment, vis-a-vis those who do, and also to ensure that a competent harbour authority cannot act in a capricious or discriminatory manner.

If no guarantee can be given that the relevant subsections of clause 3 are subordinate to the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, this amendment will be necessary to protect continuing pilots. The recent history of the actions of some port authorities has not inspired confidence in pilots as to their ability to act in a responsible manner, free from prejudice or discrimination. If the continuing pilots are to be treated fairly, as has been firmly promised by the Government, they must be protected against such attitudes.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I am glad to support my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), who, with his knowledge and personal experience of piloting, has moved the amendment so ably. He has quite rightly said that paragraphs *(c)* and *(d)* are unnecessary, as far as employment of pilots are concerned. I wished to move an amendment which has not been called, that lines 33 and 34 should be deleted. I did that because I want to make it easier for pilots to remain self-employed.

On Second Reading we were delighted that the Government promised to bring forward an amendment to make the continuing provision of self-employed services by pilots a more viable proposition. With the support of my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) who has great interest in such matters, I went to see the Minister to discuss self-employment and how we could make that easier. On Second Reading the Minister said:

"Harbour authorities will have several means of controlling pilotage costs through their control over charges and over the terms of contract for the provision of pilotage services where they are not employing pilots directly. We do not, therefore, consider that it will be necessary for the harbour authorities to have the power to withdraw pilot authorisation on the ground that the number of pilots is greater than is required where pilotage is being provided under a service contract and the pilots may be self-employed. I shall therefore be introducing an amendment in Committee that will limit the powers of harbour authorities in this respect."

I have examined carefully the Minister's amendment but it goes only halfway to meeting what we tried to achieve when my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State, myself and others went to see the Minister to discuss the ways in which we would be able to keep self-employment, as well as employed status, for the pilots. I am sorry that amendment No. 9 that he has tabled to clause 3, page 4, line 38, goes only part of the way to meeting the principle that he stated on Second Reading. Of course, we should have preferred leaving out lines 33 and 34 of clause 3, page 4, or to go along with my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby.

As the Minister said on Second Reading:

"Harbour authorities will have several means of controlling pilotage costs through their control over charges and over the terms of contract for the provision of pilotage services where they are not employing pilots directly."

I should like to repeat once again what the Minister said on Second Reading. I apologise to my hon. Friends for

[Sir Julian Ridsdale]

repeating it, but it is important for the self-employment of pilots. Running through this entire Bill is the desire to look after not only employed pilots, but also those in self-employment; that is a principle which is very close to our beliefs. The Minister said:

"We do not, therefore, consider that it will be necessary for the harbour authorities to have the power to withdraw pilot authorisation on the ground that the number of pilots is greater than is required where pilotage is being provided under a service contract and the pilots may be self-employed." —[*Official Report*, 30 March 1987; Vol. 113, c. 834-5.]

As I have said, I apologise for repeating that. I hope that the Minister will explain how his amendment meets his undertaking. Amendment No. 9 is only a shadow of what the Minister promised on Second Reading. I cannot advise my hon. Friends that it will make it easier to secure self-employment. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will agree that the aim of my hon. Friends and myself is to make the continuity of self-employment services a more viable proposition. We must pay a great deal of attention to that, because we are in danger of pushing all pilots into salaried employment rather than keeping them self-employed. I shall listen carefully to what the Minister says and I shall measure it against what he said on Second Reading, to see whether it is being fulfilled.

Mr. Porter: I support both my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), who has a detailed knowledge of these matters, and my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale). I am satisfied that under the Bill employed pilots are protected, but I am not entirely satisfied that self-employed pilots are likely to be protected from capricious or unfair competent harbour authorities. Certainly the detailed amendments do not seem to cover them. When the Minister replies to this short debate I should like him to make it clear beyond peradventure that self-employed pilots will be treated fairly and that competent harbour authorities cannot treat them in the way that my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby suggested might be possible under the legislation.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to put at rest the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friends about redundancy and conditions for pilots.

There are other difficulties for small authorities. I understand that under the Bill the responsibilities for pilots in the Gloucester-Sharpness area will be transferred to the Gloucester harbour trustees who must employ the pilots, if requested to do so. Gloucester harbour trustees do not want to employ pilots because the harbour has too many. It has 12 pilots and needs only eight. Even if it wished to employ them it does not have any money. Its only income comes from the payments of light dues by vessels coming into Sharpness which has diminished sharply in recent years and is less than the obligations which it would incur towards the pilots. Will my hon. Friend say what the harbour trustees should do?

Mr. Michael Spicer: If the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) had been selected it would have affected directly employed as much as self-employed pilots and that would go against the spirit of the Bill.

I am afraid that I cannot agree that the appeal procedure in amendment No. 12 can be justified. A pilot will have his contract of employment or other arrangement with the competent harbour authority. If there is any question of unfair dismissal or breach of contract, his remedies under the 1978 Act will be clear. If he wishes to appeal because he disagrees with the judgments of the competent harbour authority about the number of pilots needed in the port or about whether pilotage is to be provided by directly employed pilots, an agency or by some other arrangement, these matters should be the ultimate responsibility of the competent harbour authority. Therefore, I must ask for amendment No. 12 to be either withdrawn or rejected.

Amendment No. 7 seeks to remove from the competent harbour authority the power to suspend or revoke authorisations where there are too many pilots in the port and where there is a change in the arrangements for providing pilotage in the port. It would undo much of the purpose of the Bill, which is to allow pilot numbers to be kept in line with the genuine requirements. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw) that later we shall discuss compensation and general arrangements for pilots who will no longer receive authorisation because there are too many of them. Therefore, amendment No. 7 would have a direct wrecking effect on the main purpose of the Bill and I must ask for it either to be withdrawn or rejected.

However, on several occasions it has been suggested that the ability of competent harbour authorities to revoke authorisations on grounds of excess numbers creates a degree of uncertainty for those who wish to be self-employed. Several of my hon. Friends have referred to that matter and it is a fair point. I hope to persuade my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich that I have fully honoured the commitment that I gave on Second Reading. We have tabled amendment No. 9 which confines the power of a competent harbour authority to suspend or revoke authorisations on the grounds of numbers to those cases where it employs pilots directly. I thought that that was what my hon. Friend wanted and I am surprised at his general attitude to amendment No. 9. It may have to do with the qualification in the amendment.

7.45 pm

We have allowed an exception to the general rule for pilots who are authorised temporarily before the appointed day while the possibility is explored of them transferring to another port where there are vacancies. I would have thought that hon. Members on both sides of the House would think that that that was a good idea. The representatives of the ports and pilots are discussing the details of such a transfer procedure. From their meetings it seems likely to be agreed that surplus pilots will be authorised for a limited period, for example three to six months, while the possibilities of a transfer are explored. The amendment merely allows the self-employed to benefit from the temporary arrangements in the same way as those directly employed by a competent harbour authority.

Under the new legislation competent harbour authorities will have several ways of ensuring that costs are kept under control, even where they do not employ pilots directly, principally through their powers to set original numbers of authorisations, to set pilotage charges and through the terms of the contracts or agreements that will govern the provision of pilotage services by agents or self-employed pilots. They will also have the power under clause 3(5) to change the arrangements in the port from an

agency arrangement to direct employment. Termination of a contract will remain a ground on which pilot authorisations may be suspended or revoked. However, amendment No. 8 makes it clear that the termination of a contract, not a mere alteration, will provide such grounds. I hope that that clears up that point.

In another place my noble friend Lord Brabazon accepted in principle an amendment requiring a competent harbour authority to give a pilot a document which he could use as a reference if it had been found necessary to suspend or revoke his authorisation on grounds unconnected with his competence, conduct or qualifications. Amendment No. 13 fulfils that commitment.

My noble Friend also agreed to consider a suggestion by Lord Underhill that the provisions in clause 3(6), requiring a competent harbour authority to give a pilot notice in advance if his authorisation is to be suspended on grounds of incompetence or misconduct, should be extended also to cover cases where a pilot no longer meets the competent harbour authority's qualifications for a pilot—in other words the provisions set out in clause 3(5)*(b)*. We agree that there is some similarity between those types of case, which is why amendment No. 11 will extend the notice provision accordingly.

Amendment No. 20 would go much further than that in requiring a competent harbour authority, before suspending or revoking an authorisation, to give written notice in all cases, not solely those where misconduct, incompetence or lapsed qualifications are involved. We do not think that that would be appropriate. Therefore I ask the House to support amendments Nos. 9, 11 and 13 and to reject amendments Nos. 7, 20 and 12.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 4, line 36, leave out 'any alteration in or'.

No. 9, in clause 3, page 4, line 38, at end insert

'; but the authorisation of a person who provides his services as a pilot under a contract for services may not be revoked by an authority by virtue of paragraph *(c)* above unless it gave him notice before the appointed day that the number of persons it proposed to authorise exceeded the number required to be authorised and it proposed to revoke his authorisation after allowing him a reasonable period from the appointed day to seek authorisation by another competent harbour authority.'.

No. 11, in clause 3, page 4, line 40, after '*(a)*', insert or *(b)*'.

No. 13, in clause 3, page 4, line 43, at end insert—

'( ) Where a competent harbour authority suspends or revokes an authorisation of any person by virtue of paragraph *(c)* or *(d)* of subsection (5) above, it shall give him notice in writing—

(a) stating that the suspension or revocation was by virtue of that paragraph; and

(b) specifying the duration of the authorisation in question and any previous authorisations granted to that person by the authority.'.—*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Mr. Wallace: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 4, line 49, after 'is' insert '*(a)*'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 15, in page 4, line 50, leave out from second 'authority' to 'be' in line 51 and insert

'; or

(b) an officer of such a harbour authority as is mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above, having duties which involve the supervision and management of the authorised pilots for such a harbour,

shall not by reason of his employment as a pilot or his holding any such office as is mentioned above.'.

Mr. Wallace: This amendment deals with cases in which the competent harbour authority is also the local authority and, because of the general legislation, which does not permit employees of a local authority to be members of committees of that local authority, would allow exceptions to that general rule in cases of pilotage committees.

The Bill as it stands allows for an exception in the case of persons who hold any office or employment as a pilot. The cases to which the amendment is directed are such cases as those of a senior or principal harbourmaster who has been a pilot and held a licence but, possibly because he has been taken into administrative duties, is no longer a licence holder and after the passage of this Bill will not be an authorised pilot. Nevertheless, the local authorities in my own constituency, which will be the competent harbour authorities for their areas, certainly feel that it will be of great value to have on committees, particularly the examination committee, which will examine pilots and grant authorisations, and sometimes the disciplinary committee, the services of a senior officer such as a harbourmaster or pilot-master, who has no doubt had long experience and acquired expertise in this area. The local authorities do not wish to find themselves in a position in which the pilots may have representation from their own number, which is right and proper, but they cannot have their officer because he is no longer an authorised pilot.

This matter has been pressed with the Department of Transport for some time and the Under-Secretary of State gave me the following response in a recent letter:

"I find it hard to see the case for this in principle, given that management in other local authority departments enjoys no such exemption."

In response to that, first in terms of Scottish legislation, section 126 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 provides that teachers may be members of the education committee and its sub-committees. No distinction is made between teachers and head teachers, so quite clearly people well up the ladder are permitted to be members of that committee. So what I am suggesting is no major breach of principle.

The Bill as it stands allows authorised pilots who would technically be employees of the authority to sit on committees. So again there is an exception to the general principle. At present, senior officials do sit on committees. I am thinking in particular of the director of ports and harbours for Shetland Islands council. He is not a licensed pilot, but he has been one and has considerable nautical expertise, and he is a member of the examination committee. That has been allowed under the primary legislation, with the pilotage order and the byelaws which have been made under that. So there is indeed a precedent.

The other reason why this case is different from other cases, in which it would not be expected that a senior member of management would also be a member of a local authority committee, is that we are dealing with a situation in which that expertise can often be very valuable and necessary. Indeed, there is judicial authority for this. In a case in Glasgow sheriff court back in 1951, the case of Conway *v.* Clyde pilotage authority, the sheriff, in his judgment, said that the most convenient method of providing a proper committee

[Mr. Wallace]

"would seem to be the setting up of small standing tribunal, on which the pilot master and deputy pilot master, the representatives of the pilots and other persons with nautical skill would be in the majority and which would be charged with reporting to the executive committee its conclusions on the facts of the accident . . ."

There we have judicial authority for the desirability of having a committee which contains people with expertise.

If this Bill is not extended in the way that my amendment seeks, I believe that there could be serious prejudice or at least considerable disadvantage to a local authority, which would suffer if on the committee in question the pilots had their own representatives with that expertise but the local authority would have to be represented by a layman, an ordinary elected councillor, possibly. That could be a disadvantage not only to the local authority — in this case the competent harbour authority — but also to the pilot, if it is a matter of discipline, or the person seeking authorisation.

I think that it is to the advantage of all concerned that the committees in question should have on them people with expertise. I very much hope that the Minister will allow this amendment. As I have indicated, I do not think that there is any major departure of principle; it would only permit what has been happening up to now to continue.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In another place, as has been said, we accepted an amendment exempting authorised pilots from the normal bar on employees of local authorities from membership of local authority committees, on the grounds that there might be some committees, for instance those inquiring into accidents, on which the up-to-date experience and knowledge of pilots might be useful. These amendments, however, seek to extend that exemption to members of the harbour management. I know that this has been asked for by Shetland Islands council.

We feel that we must resist the amendment, given that the management in other local authority departments does not have these exemptions and, perhaps more important, other local authorities which already have pilotage responsibilities find no difficulty in dealing with all aspects of pilotage services, including such matters as examination and discipline, despite the fact that their directors are unable to sit as members of the relevant committee.

For those reasons, we must resist these amendments.

Mr. Wallace: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has said anything new. I merely observe that the proposal is an enabling measure; it would not compel any local authority which is also a competent harbour authority to engage a senior member of management. Quite clearly, however, we have not over many months now been able to persuade the Minister or his colleagues. I will not press this to a Division.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4

EMPLOYMENT ETC. OF AUTHORISED PILOTS.

Mr. Spicer: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 5, line 24, after 'above', insert

'who is not already employed by it under such a contract'.

In a few ports, again in Orkney and Shetland, pilots are already directly employed by the harbour authority in its role as the pilotage authority. This amendment is to make it clear that where such arrangements exist, the authority is not obliged to make a fresh offer of employment or to upset existing arrangements.

Mr. Wallace: I thank the Minister for this helpful amendment. It helps to clarify the position, as I understand the next two Government amendments do. This is something which could have been unclear and could have led to further difficulties, and we certainly welcome this clarification.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move amendment No. 17 in, page 5, line 28, leave out

'this subsection shall not apply'

and insert

'it need not do so'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 18.

Mr. Spicer: The competent harbour authority will be obliged to offer direct employment to authorised pilots unless the pilots have decided that they need not do so —for instance, if they wish to be self-employed. But the pilots cannot prevent the competent harbour authority from employing them directly should the ports wish to do so. As the Bill stands, there has been some concern that, if pilots wish to be self-employed, ports will be obliged to accept that. The amendments make it clear that the ports merely have the option to accept self-employment or other arrangements.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 5, line 30, leave out 'this subsection shall not apply' and insert 'it need not do so'.

8 pm

Mr. Thornton: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 5, line 30, at end insert—

'( ) Where by virtue of subsection (2) above a competent harbour authority is obliged to offer to employ any person, that offer shall be for not less than one year and shall in respect of remuneration and pension be no less favourable than those recommended immediately before the appointed day for the former pilotage district in which the harbour of the competent authority falls.'.

Amendment No. 19 contains two elements which I will deal with separately. The first is that the offer of employment under a contract of employment to be made under subsection 2 shall be for a period of

"not less than one year."

By tabling the amendment I am not attempting to circumvent clause 3(5), especially paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* which, by and large, will only apply to exceptional cases. I acknowledge that the contract of employment is dependent upon a person being authorised. Should a person lose his authorisation for a proper reason, I accept that, subject to the satisfaction of the provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, his contract of employment should be terminated.

The amendment is designed to allow pilots and other suitably qualified people with the potential to become pilots to make a commitment to pilotage in the new regimes that will come into existence on the appointed day. Those people are hardly likely to do that in the knowledge that they could be authorised under clause 3(1) and accept a contract of employment under clause 4(2) on one day and then, for whatever reason, have the authorisation

revoked the next day and, as a consequence, have their contracts of employment terminated. That is not a climate conducive to encouraging the competent and efficient to remain in the profession or attract the right calibre of man into the profession in the future.

A similar amendment was tabled at the Committee stage in the House of Lords. In a debate on 9 December the Minister said:

"But I think that the suggestion of a fixed term which may be extended — and I emphasise the word 'may' — during which authorisations will remain in force is a helpful one, and the minimum period of one year would also help the pilots to plan ahead. But we had to think a little about the relationship to a pilot's contract of employment or other agreement with the CHA." — [*Official Report, House of Lords, Public Bill Committee*, 9 December 1986, c. 31.]

I could not agree more. Unfortunately on Report in another place on 12 February, the Minister said:

"On reflection, I am afraid I do not think that this would be desirable. In future a pilot's security about his future must rest on the terms of his agreement with the CHA" — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 February 1987, Vol. 484, c. 758.]

It is difficult to understand the change in attitude and equally how the results of "reflection" equate with the Government's promise to ensure the equitable treatment of the continuing pilot. That promise, I remind the Committee, was responsible for the pilots' qualified support for reform.

Secondly, the amendment contains provision to ensure that in financial terms pilots will receive not less than that to which — for a negotiated level of work — they are presently entitled. Reference has already been made to the fact that pilots have given their qualified support to reform on the basis of Government promises ensuring the equitable treatment of pilots. It may be appropriate to quote some of the references. The Green Paper "Marine Pilotage: A Consultative Document" published in December 1984 states in paragraph 8.1:

"The Government accept that the proposals in this paper will represent a fundamental change in the organisation of pilotage which entails an obligation to ensure that the existing members of the profession are treated fairly and equitably when the new policy is implemented."

In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) dated April 1986 my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"But in drawing up the new proposals the Government's aim will be to deal equitably with all those involved including in particular both the pilots who will be retiring and those who will be continuing."

In a letter to the chairman of the pilots national organisation, the United Kingdom Pilots Association (Marine) dated May 1986:

"I am satisfied too that what we propose will deal fairly with the members of your distinguished profession."

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in a speech to the pilots' annual conference in October 1986 said:

"Both I and the Minister for Shipping, Lord Brabazon, will do all we can to ease that transaction and to ensure that you get a fair deal."

Finally, the White Paper "Marine Pilotage: Legislative Proposals" published in November 1986 states in paragraph 41:

"The Government . . . is confident too that the legislation will provide a lasting basis for the future of Marine Pilotage while at the same time providing equitable treatment to the present and future members of a distinguished profession."

If those guarantees are to be fulfilled, undertakings would have to be entered into through legislation or binding agreement. First, there would have to be guarantees that entry into the new regimes would be at an income level of not less than the present level of earnings and, in addition, that pension contributions would be maintained at the present level.

Secondly, continuing pilots should be deemed to have been employed since the date of the first licensing. Thirdly, there should be protection of pension rights, including the doubling up of years between the ages of 60 and 65 and the continuation of the enhanced early retirement scheme as an on-going benefit of the fund.

Finally, the provision of the lump sum compensation agreement should continue for a period of not less than, for example, 10 years. The amendment addresses only the first of those four matters.

It is interesting to note what the Pilotage Commission had to say in a submission to the Minister responsible for shipping on 6 June 1985. It stated that in any future reform pilotage service the Commission believed that

"Regard must be had to the fair treatment of the continuing pilots who should not be disadvantaged in respect of their overall service entitlements."

In a letter to Lord Brabazon, the Under-Secretary of State, dated 26 November 1986, the Pilotage Commission stated:

"You will recall that in commenting on the Green Paper the Commission stressed that Harbour Authorities should be required to employ pilots on fairly negotiated terms in respect of pay and conditions having regard to the pilots current recommended level of earnings and other entitlements. In this respect the Bill contains no safeguard to ensure the equitable treatment of pilots and I would wish to place on record the Commission's view as to the need for a suitably worded amendment to remedy this defect."

That point was picked up by Viscount Simon in Committee stage in the House of Lords. He said:

"We regard this as one of the most important amendments that we have to consider in this Bill, because the Government have given an assurance, I understand, in several forms to the pilots, that those who are at present licensed pilots and who wish to continue as authorised pilots under the new pilotage authorities will be fairly and equitably treated. That is something which I think the whole Committee would wish to see done. But there is nothing at all that I can see in the Bill which makes provision for this and that is why we have put the amendment down."

In reply, among other things, the Minister said:

"It is not unusual for legislation to provide that, where employees of one body are being transferred to a new employer, their level of earnings should be preserved. But in this case self-employed members of the profession are being offered employment."

However, the noble Lord Brightman had already said:

"I also support the spirit although not the form of the amendment . . . but an obligation to offer a contract of employment does not have any meaning as a matter of law, unless there is spelt out the terms on which that offer is to be made. I therefore ask: where in the Bill do we find the terms of the obligatory offer? What does the harbour authority have to do in order to fulfil its statutory obligations? Will any old offer do?

If nothing is spelt out as regards the ascertainment of the terms of the offer, which, by statute, the harbour authority will have to make, it seems to me that the obligation is really meaningless."—[*Official Report, House of Lords, Public Bill Committee*, 10 December 1986; c. 45-51.]

So much for the value of a contract of employment.

At this stage, nothing has yet been spelt out on the terms of the offer. In any case, are the pilots truly self-employed? My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister obviously does not think so because in the letter to Mr. Wilkin, to which I referred, she stated:

[Mr. Thornton]

"and in any case I think you will agree that, although pilots are treated as self employed for Inland Revenue purposes, the profession has few of the characteristics normally associated with self employment."

On Report, the Government introduced an amendment which is now clause 5 of the Bill. The clause is entitled:

"Temporary procedure for resolving disputes as to terms of employment".

In introducing the amendment, the Minister said:

"I made it plain, and I have made it plain again today, that I did not regard such a guarantee as justifiable, but I recognised that there was a feeling in the Committee that the provision about the offer of employment needed to be supplemented. Several noble Lords suggested that an arbitration procedure should be considered. Those amendments set out such a procedure which I hope your Lordships will accept." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 February 1987; Vol. 39, c. 812.]

It has been made clear by the pilots that this is no substitute for Government guarantees, a fact that was conveyed to Lord Brabazon by Lord Underhill in a letter which stated:

"The main question however"—

it remains unanswered—

"is what is the Government proposing to insert in the Bill to carry out the many undertakings given to pilots on the conditions of service and benefits for continuing pilots."

On Third Reading in the House of Lords, the Minister referred at column 791 to the terms of the general guidance that the Secretary of State will give to the arbitration panel under clause 5(3) which he said should, if at all possible, be agreed in advance by both the pilots and the ports. He went on to say that the pilots and ports had already been able to agree on seven general considerations to which the panel would be required to have regard as appropriate in making its determinations while recognising that others may also need to be taken into account in some cases. It appears that the Government believe that they are fulfilling their promises and undertakings to the pilots by the institution of an arbitration panel which shall have to have regard "as it considers appropriate" to some general guidance notes provided by the Secretary of State. I suggest that any reasonable man can come to his own conclusions on whether that is the case. The pilots do not think so, nor do I.

The amendment is intended to assist the Government to fulfil part of their repeated promises to ensure the equitable treatment of the continuing pilots. The guarantees have been given successively by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, Lord Brabazon and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport — the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) — on Second Reading. I should like to hear from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State how the Government proposes to deliver that commitment. Without such a provision in the Bill, the Government's promises will have been meaningless.

Dr. Godman: I have good deal of sympathy for the amendment. It states:

"a competent harbour authority is obliged to offer to employ any person".

Should not that obligation be extended to those who work on, say, pilot cutters and to those who do pilotage work within ports? I am sure that the Minister will acknowledge that I have given him notice, albeit just a few hours, of the questions that I should like to put to him and to put in the *Official Report*.

8.15 pm

Will the Minister give the Committee an assurance that the Bill's provisions will not have an adverse effect on the future employment of licensed river and dock pilots in the port of London and on those employed as licensed dock and harbour pilots in south Wales ports? I need hardly remind the Minister that those men have given excellent service over many years in meeting the needs of shipping in those ports. Is the Minister satisfied that the Bill's provisions for the future employment of and compensation for persons employed in the pilotage service, other than pilotage authority staff, will ensure that such persons are treated no less favourably than those employed by pilotage authorities?

My next question is important to ancillary employees. What criteria will the Pilotage Commission apply in carrying out its responsibilities under the Bill's provisions for the making of arrangements under schemes which will apply to employees as well — for example, pilot boat crews and others on the staff of the pilotage authorities? The amendment is concerned with the terms and conditions of employment of pilots, but the provisions need to be extended to those other employees. Will the Minister's officials give guidance to the Pilotage Commission to ensure that those employees are dealt with fairly and that the commission applies the same standards in making arrangements for a scheme for such employees as for pilotage authority staff?

The hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) said that concern had been expressed in the other place about the need to treat pilots equitably. I wholeheartedly share that concern, but my concern extends to those who assist pilots to fulfil their responsibilities. The hon. Member for Crosby mentioned clause 5. Does clause 5 cover those employees and other persons in terms of arbitration? Their terms and conditions of employment must not be ignored by the Government or by the competent harbour authorities.

Mr. Steel: I listened with great interest to what the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) said in a long contribution on an important matter. The Bill's main thrust is clearly to change the procedure whereby pilots are employed. In general, it is reasonable for the Minister to say that when the Government actively seek by legislation to change the terms of reference of any person's employment, certain matters will be taken into account. Those points could be made in respect of steelmen, miners and many other people. I had hoped that Conservative Members would join us in making that point. This does not in any sense dilute what the hon. Member for Crosby said about the group of people whose terms of employment are being changed by an Act of Parliament. As legislators we must be sure that we are fair, just and equitable in the way in which we proceed.

I shall be interested to hear the Minister's reply to his hon. Friend, who made a very telling intervention. I have read the Bill from cover to cover, but I can find nothing to suggest that ancillary staff will have access to an arbitration tribunal if the terms of reference of their employment are altered as a consequence of the Bill. We are talking not only about a change in the pilotage service, but the effect that that will have on ancillary staff in the

pilotage service—for example, those who are employed on pilot cutters. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Goodman) asked whether there is anything in the Bill that will benefit them in respect of an appeal to a tribunal. We are talking not only about pilots in the United Kingdom but about others who work on pilot cutters, who also have rights and contracts of employment. We should not lose sight of that fact when discussing changes in pilot employment contracts.

Like the rest of the Committee, I shall be interested to hear the Minister's reply on a very important and fundamental principle in the Bill.

Mr. Wallace: There has been—certainly on Second Reading—consensus on the Bill and on a rationalisation of pilotage services in the United Kingdom. It is essential that Parliament, in taking this step, which will have such impact on the lives and employment prospects of so many people, should address the conditions that will affect the incomes of those people. The guidance note contains a provision which, if applied, could lead to fair and equitable treatment of pilots.

A distinction must be drawn between employees and those who are self-employed. Self-employment carries risks and uncertainties that are not always felt by employees who enjoy the full protection of employment legislation. The Secretary of State should also include it in his guidance note that when pilots become employed and are brought into the staff structure of competent harbour authorities, their remuneration will have effect and will be noted by other senior officers of the harbour authority.

I cannot claim any experience in negotiations, but one does not need to have that experience to observe that differentials in salaries often lead to conflict and difficulty in industrial relations. That should be borne in mind when new rates of remuneration are fixed. Throughout the passage of the Bill in the other place and in the time leading up to the presentation of the Bill, pilots have been given assurances that they will be treated fairly and reasonably and that principles of equity will apply. The hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) is right to press the Government.

Dr. Godman: How many ancillary employees are employed by the Shetland pilotage authority?

Mr. Wallace: I would have needed advance notice of that specific question. Perhaps I could write and tell the hon. Member.

We ask the Government to assure us that what they are proposing will be fair and reasonable. We ask the Minister to say whether there is any way in which the guidance notes can be made more binding on the arbitration panel. The guidance notes that have been agreed between the two sides of the industry will help to ensure some degree of fairness. Will the Minister tell us how they will become more binding on the panel?

Mr. Michael Spicer: My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), who quoted the Pilotage Commission and also my noble Friend Lord Brabazon, was being a little unfair because those quotations were taken from a point in the debate before we had agreed to the statutory arbitration procedures to be included in the Bill.

In answer to the question by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), supported by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), boat crews and other staff employed by the pilotage authorities will be included in the schemes under clause 24 and will be transferred to the employment of the appropriate competent harbour authority. If they are employed by a private company, they will not be included in the schemes because, unlike the pilotage authorities, the employees of private companies will not have been abolished, as it were. If the competent harbour authority decides to make changes in the arrangements for boat services which involve redundancy, the employer will have to meet his obligations in the normal way.

The only exemption or exception is where boat crews or other people are employed by the pilots themselves. In that case the Pilotage Commission will have discretion to include them in the winding-up scheme. We are discussing these details at official level with the Pilotage Commission. So far as those who are employed by pilots are concerned, the Pilotage Commission will have discretion over the scheme that it puts forward.

The amendment is intended to require a competent harbour authority which employs pilots to guarantee rates of remuneration under the new arrangements. We do not agree that it is reasonable for pilots to have a cast-iron guarantee of this sort, because it would severely hamstring the ability of competent harbour authorities to negotiate sensible improvements in the efficiency of the service. The pilots' position is well protected by the arbitration provisions in clause 5. General guidance to the panel will be given by the Secretary of State, and representatives of pilots and the ports have agreed a list of considerations which, in their view, should constitute that advice.

Among the considerations are the pilots' past earnings, recommended and actual. The British Ports Association has indicated that it would be willing to include these considerations in agreed guidelines for the employment of pilots by port authorities. I have seen no evidence that the ports are seeking to press down levels of earnings or to get pilots' services on the cheap. Even if they were, the arbitration procedure amounts to considerable protection. The going rate of pay for a pilot will, I am sure, remain much as it is at present, but it is important that the competent harbour authorities should have the ability to negotiate with the pilots to see that in return there is an acceptable level of productivity in the port.

8.30 pm

It seems likely that most pilots will remain in the pilots' national pension fund. As that is a private pension fund, I do not believe that we should legislate to pre-empt the decisions of the managers. In any event, the British Ports Association, which, with the pilots, will be responsible for the fund under the new regime, has already given undertakings that current levels of benefit will be maintained, subject always to the financial position of the fund. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Thornton: I have listened carefully to what the Minister has said and I accept entirely his expression of good will. However, I must press the amendment to a Division because ministerial expressions of good will are not a bankable commodity for the future fair and equitable treatment of pilots. Therefore, I ask the Committee to support the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 14, Noes 85.

Division No. 144] **[8.31 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald	Prescott, John
Carlile, Alexander (Mont'g'y)	Skinner, Dennis
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Stott, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin	Taylor, Matthew
Haynes, Frank	Wallace, James
Howells, Geraint	
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. Malcolm Thornton and
Powell, Raymond (Ogmore)	Dr. Norman A. Godman.

NOES

Amess, David	Hordern, Sir Peter
Ancram, Michael	Howarth, Gerald (Cannock)
Arnold, Tom	Howell, Ralph (North, N)
Ashby, David	Jessel, Toby
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Jones, Robert (Herts W)
Atkins, Robert (South Ribble)	Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset N)	Lawrence, Ivan
Baldry, Tony	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Batiste, Spencer	Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Bellingham, Henry	McCrindle, Robert
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Malone, Gerald
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Marlow, Antony
Bottomley, Peter	Mates, Roger
Bowden, Gerald (Dulwich)	Moynihan, Hon C.
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Neubert, Michael
Bryan, Sir Paul	Newton, Tony
Burt, Alistair	Norris, Steven
Butterfill, John	Onslow, Cranley
Chope, Christopher	Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Clark, Hon A. (Plym'th S'n)	Portillo, Michael
Colvin, Michael	Powley, John
Cope, John	Proctor, K. Harvey
Couchman, James	Rathbone, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen	Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Durant, Tony	Ryder, Richard
Eyre, Sir Reginald	Salisbury, Hon Timothy
Fallon, Michael	Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Favell, Anthony	Spencer, Derek
Fenner, Dame Peggy	Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Forth, Eric	Stanbrook, Ivor
Fox, Sir Marcus	Stern, Michael
Freeman, Roger	Stevens, Lewis (Nuneaton)
Gardiner, Sir Philip	Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Greenway, Harry	Thompson, Patrick (N'ich N)
Gregory, Conal	Twinn, Dr Ian
Griffiths, Peter (Portsm'th N)	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Ground, Patrick	Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Hamilton, Hon A. (Epsom)	Wells, Bowen (Hertford)
Hampson, Dr Keith	Wheeler, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth	Wiggin, Jerry
Harris, David	
Hawkins, Sir Paul (N'folk SW)	Tellers for the Noes:
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael	Mr. Francis Maude and
Hill, James	Mr. David Lightbown.
Hind, Kenneth	

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Thurston: I beg to move, amendment No. 21, in page 6, line 3, leave out subsection (4).

Subsection 4(4) states:

"A competent harbour authority may refuse to authorise any person who is not willing to provide his services as a pilot in accordance with the arrangements made for the provision of such services in its area."

Prior to Third Reading in the Lords, the subsection read:

"A competent harbour authority may refuse to authorise any person who is not willing to provide his services as a pilot in accordance with such arrangements as the authority considers appropriate under subsection (1) above."

That clause was so draconian as to be untrue. It effectively negated all the promises that were made by the Government that they would ensure the equitable treatment of pilots. It effectively nullified the intention of the newly introduced arbitration board.

In view of the statements that the Minister made in the last debate, I do not believe that this subsection, as redrafted, improves on that situation. It is clearly subordinate to subsection (1) of the clause, which states:

"Subject to subsection (2) below, a competent harbour authority may make such arrangements as it considers appropriate for the provision of the services of authorised pilots in the area in relation to which its duty under section 2(1) above is exercisable (whether under a contract of employment or a contract for services)."

I have underlined the important aspect to which subsection (4) clearly is subordinate—such arrangements as it considers appropriate for the provision of services. This amendment serves no useful purpose, in that the general terms in which the Bill is written do not impose a duty on any competent harbour authority to authorise any person it does not wish to.

I shall comment on this amendment in relation to the Minister's remarks in the last debate. He feels that the assurances that have been given are sufficient. Clearly the pilots do not. The guidelines that have been laid down, unless they are contained somewhere in the Bill or schedule, need to be more substantive than a ministerial assurance.

Nothing that I have heard tonight allays my fears that the pilots may find themselves unable to receive the sort of treatment which the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as well as the noble Lord, Lord Brabazon, promised that they would.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This amendment may remove the competent harbour authority's right to have the final say as to whether it will offer direct employment. Since that is fundamental to the Bill I must ask my hon. Friend to withdraw it, or we should resist it.

Mr. Brinton: I have been puzzling over this amendment. I am an amateur and I do not understand the technicalities. However, it seems to me that this paragraph means that the authority that decides on qualifications of a professional pilot also decides whether he should be employed. If he is not willing to be employed by that authority, does that mean that he loses his qualifications to work as a pilot?

Mr. Spicer: It is the authorisation that gives the pilot his status. It then becomes another matter as to whether he is given sufficient opportunity to be employed.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5

TEMPORARY PROCEDURE FOR RESOLVING DISPUTES AS TO TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

8.45 pm

Mr. Thurston: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 6, line 13, after 'employment' insert 'or contract of services'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 24, in page 6, line 22, after 'employment' insert

'or the kinds of contracts of services'.

Mr. Thornton: The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that all the continuing pilots will be treated in a similar fashion — that is, both those who accept contracts of employment under section 4(2) and those who opt for alternative methods of employment.

The Government see the clause as a means whereby they are fulfilling the several undertakings given to pilots. The clause was written into the Bill as an amendment on Report in another place. In moving the Amendment, the Minister stated:

"I believe that with the acceptance of these amendments there can no longer be any doubt in anyone's mind that the Government are fulfilling the undertakings we have given the pilots who continue in the profession, no less than those who retire, that they will receive fair and equitable treatment." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 February 1987; Vol. 484, c. 813.]

As worded, this clause will apply only to those pilots who accept contracts of employment and obviously, if not amended in the manner suggested, the Government would not be fulfilling their undertaking — as exemplified by the amendment to clause 4—to a large number, perhaps the majority, of the continuing pilots.

This is in line with amendments previously introduced into the Bill by the Government — for example, by amending clause 4(1) to include

"(whether under a contract of employment or a contract for services)."

That would make self-employment an option which could be considered. Without it, self-employment is not a starter. I hope that the Minister will accept this amendment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have introduced into the Bill, by way of an amendment in the House of Lords, a temporary arbitration procedure with regard to contracts of employment between the competent harbour authorities and the pilots.

The suggestion in these amendments is that those arbitration procedures should also be applied to a case where pilots are not directly employed by the competent harbour authority. We believe that to be unnecessary, since any such arrangements can be introduced only if there is an agreement between the parties.

There is a further point. Contracts for services may, in some cases, be placed as a result of competitive tenders put out to two or more possible contractors. Clearly, arbitration would have no place in determining what the terms of a contract resulting from competitive tendering should be.

I must ask my hon. Friend to withdraw this amendment or urge the Committee to resist it.

Mr. Thornton: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move amendment No. 23 in page 6, line 20, leave out second 'the' and insert 'an'.

This is a technical amendment to make it clear that the chairman and or members of the arbitration panel may be different in different cases of dispute.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 6, line 26, leave out from first 'of' to 'by' in line 27 and insert

'three members, one appointed by the Secretary of State, one'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Amendment No. 26, in page 6, line 26, leave out from first 'of' to 'by' in line 27 and insert

'three members, one, the Chairman, appointed by the Secretary of State, one'.

Government amendments Nos. 27 and 28.

Mr. Spicer: Amendment No. 26, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) makes it clear that the bodies representing the ports and the pilots are each to appoint one member of the arbitration panel. It also provides that the member of the panel appointed by the Secretary of State should be as chairman. I am happy to accept that amendment, and therefore not to press amendments Nos. 25 and 28. However, I would wish to move amendment No. 27, which complements my hon. Friend's amendment and which I will ask the Committee to accept.

Mr. Hill: I am afraid that there are difficulties here. Certainly, the British Ports Association, Associated British Ports and the United Kingdom Pilots Association have all raised serious queries about the arbitration panel. We understand that there will be a chairman appointed by the Secretary of State who will be completely independent —that goes without saying. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will reaffirm that when he sums up. Also, the chairman would have to be of a legal persuasion. He would have to have some experience in arbitration matters and would perhaps have served a considerable time on some industrial panel. I think that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to confirm those points.

One of the queries from the United Kingdom Pilots Association is, how will the operating costs of the panel be funded? I am sure that there is a fairly simple explanation but the association does not seem to understand that side of the matter yet. When is the arbitration panel scheduled to be in operation? Is there some time scale that my hon. Friend the Minister could give us?

Another difficulty has arisen. The British Ports Association is not necessarily representative of all the employers in the ports.

Mr. Stutt: It is not.

Mr. Hill: I am receiving confirmation of that fact from the Opposition, so it must be right. Associated British Ports is not a member of the British Ports Association. There are rumours — no doubt the Department of Transport will know whether they are true—that other ports are leaving the British Ports Association and that there may be difficulties in the future in getting a representative port view on the arbitration panel.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman talked about the chairman of the panel in his view being someone from the legal profession — perhaps a QC, as is often the case with arbitration panels. Would he expect one of the other two members to be a practising pilot?

Mr. Hill: I think that the Minister will agree with me that that would be the right way to proceed. The difficulty is that the arbitration panel would at the same time have to have a fair voice from the port employers; it would not necessarily have to be weighed completely towards the pilotage employees.

Associated British Ports is suggesting that the two other members of the panel—the hon. Member for Greenock

[Mr. Hill]

and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned the pilot—can either be regarded as acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, in which case they should have no connection with either of the parties subject to the arbitration, or they should be direct representatives chosen by the parties concerned. I know that Associated British Ports will have no argument about that. Therefore, that confirms what I said to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow.

The Bill currently does not provide for either of those alternatives. The pilots will be able to choose a direct representative, which is fair and equitable, but the port industry nominees envisage having no direct connection with the port subject to arbitration. Therefore, the essential balance of the three-man panel will be lacking. The idea is being floated that if the essential balance is lacking it may mean that the port representative might be employed by a competitor and might have an interest in achieving a result favourable to the pilots. I do not feel that there is any foundation in that, but, at this stage of setting up an arbitration panel, the port authorities will be just as sensitive to the make-up of the arbitration panel as the pilots themselves.

A suggestion has been made to a Mr. Finney of the British Ports Association that the list of the harbour authorities' representatives should consist of two names—that is, on the panel itself—nominated by Associated British Ports together with British ports authorities' representatives. I can see that that could be carried still further. If there are port authorities that are not members of the British Ports Association, obviously they would have to have some understanding as well.

Mr. Stott: I am listening carefully to what the hon. Gentleman says. However, I wonder whether it would be more beneficial if he were to use his undoubted talent and powers of persuasion to persuade Associated British Ports to rejoin the British Ports Association. That would resolve the problem completely.

Mr. Hill: I shall definitely do what little I can to achieve that but it is far beyond a lone Back-Bencher's commitment. I know that all the bodies involved in this tussle for control—that is what it is—will be listening this evening and they will have to finalise that between themselves. I think that there will be an equitable arrangement on the ports side.

All I am saying is that all is not harmony and light on the matter of the arbitration panel. There will have to be more talks in depth with the possible members of the panel and I certainly feel that the pilots must have a firm representation. The ports authorities must have a firm representation and I could even see, as was mentioned earlier, that there might be an ancillary staff representation, because my understanding of the debate is that their voice will also be heard in arbitration matters.

Obviously my hon. Friend the Minister will not be able to give me a positive answer. He will have to find out from his Department whether there are difficulties. I believe that more port authorities are thinking of leaving the British Ports Association. However, having said that, I see a glimmer of a message coming from the Box. Perhaps if I stall for 10 seconds or more I might find out whether it will help. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has a good grasp of the Bill and is only too anxious to cast some light on it this evening.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am told that the note does not help much, so I shall try on my own.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), the costs will be met from the Pilotage Commission funds, which were part of the scheme that was proposed to the Secretary of State. They will come into operation as soon as there is a dispute that makes that necessary. That could be before the appointed day, if necessary.

As for the machinations between ABP and the BPA, I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Test would expect me to join in those. It is for those bodies to come to an agreement. It is certainly the intention of the Government that the port should be properly represented. If there is any doubt about the extent of representation for the ports, the Secretary of State has powers under the Bill to make regulations, after considering the views of the parties. The position is clear: we want representatives of the ports to be on the arbitration panel.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 26, in page 6, line 26, leave out from first 'of' to 'by' in line 27 and insert

'three members, one, the Chairman, appointed by the Secretary of State, one'.

No. 27, in page 6, line 29, after 'and', insert 'one by'.

—[Mr. Michael Spicer.]

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 6, line 42, at end insert—

'(4A) The references to contracts in subsection (1) above do not include contracts of employment entered into before the appointed day for provision of services as a pilot before that day.'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 80.

9 pm

Mr. Spicer: The temporary arbitration procedure is intended to apply to cases in which a formerly self-employed pilot has been taken into employment by the competent harbour authority. In a few ports, notably Orkney and Shetland, pilots are already employed under well-established arrangements. There is no need, therefore, for special arbitration arrangements to apply. The amendments would exclude those cases from the temporary arbitration procedure.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

PILOT BOATS

Mr. Thornton: I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 7, line 17, leave out

'is satisfied that it is suitable for use as a pilot boat'

and insert

'complies with regulations for such boats made by the Secretary of State under section 21 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979'.

I can speak with considerable experience when I say that there are few things more vital to the safety of pilots than those small boats that they use to board and leave vessels. On Report in the House of Lords, the Minister stated his view that the suggestion that the Secretary of State should approve and license pilot boats would be unnecessary and it would be sufficient for the competent harbour authorities to have that power.

On Third Reading the Minister stated:

"Our approach encompasses belt and braces—first, the regulations under the Merchant Shipping Act, for which I have promised to bring forward proposals; and secondly, the new statutory obligation on the CHA".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 March 1987; Vol. 485, c. 798.]

The amendment will not remove responsibility for approving or licensing pilot boats from competent harbour authorities. It will remain with them but it will provide them with clear minimum standards to ensure that they do not approve or license a boat that is not completely suitable, always bearing in mind that, for many competent harbour authorities, that will be a new responsibility outside their previous experience.

Pilot boats operate in weather conditions in which the only other boats of comparable size likely to venture to sea are the lifeboats of the RNLI. I am sure that the House will not overlook the fact that, in terms of serious injury and fatality, pilotage is proportionately about the second-highest risk profession in the country. Two examples within recent memory will be sufficient to support that statement. A Falmouth boat pilot lost his life attempting to board a passenger ferry that was desperately seeking shelter, having been damaged in heavy seas. It was subsequently found that the pilot boat was defective in some respects.

A Blyth pilot lost his life attempting to board a comparatively small ship in bad weather. The pilot boat had not been properly manned and the Department had to write to the Blyth pilotage authority. The question of manning levels for pilot boats is, I accept, not something that can be applied right across the board. However, I know—again from personal experience—how difficult it is to get a man out of the water if the boat that is attempting to extricate him has insufficient crew on board. In most cases a minimum of two crew members is required. The man in the water is extremely heavy. If he is unconscious or injured he is virtually incapable of helping himself to get out of the water. In the operation of boarding and taking off pilots, it is essential that competent harbour authorities have regard to minimum standards, including the quality and standard of the boat and of manning levels. Safety must be paramount.

I do not believe that the Government subscribe to the view that the safety record has been satisfactory, yet the standards contributing to that record were, in the absence of legislative regulations, set by pilotage authorities, that are independent, non-commercial and non-profit-making organisations. If we assume that in future the same constraints will not apply, I suggest that the record is hardly likely to improve. However, if what the Minister said on Third Reading in another place is correct—he said that it was intended to make regulations under section 21 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 for pilot boats to which the competent harbour authorities will need to have regard in the exercise of the statutory obligation imposed upon them by the clause—I would be more than happy and would wish to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) has explained why he feels that it is necessary that the Minister complies with his wishes on pilot boats. He has done so from a wealth of personal experience. He is the only Member of this place who is a qualified pilot; he is the only Member who has boarded a ship from a pilot cutter. I suspect that I am one of the very few who have assisted him in boarding a ship.

I spent five years in the merchant service both as a helmsman and an able seaman. In leaving and entering the ports of the United Kingdom, or ports around the world, it can be one of the most difficult tasks to bring the pilot on board. In normal circumstances it is a reasonably easy thing to do, but those of us who have been to sea and have spent some time on it recognise that the sea is not always as kind as it should be. There are conditions when the taking on board of a pilot can be an extremely hazardous operation. I have been involved in such operations and I concur with what the hon. Gentleman has said. It is extremely dangerous.

The Bill will transfer responsibility for pilotage, including pilot cutters, those who work on them and the delivery of a pilot on a ship, to competent harbour authorities, and we must be sure that we have the safety of those men and those on the pilot cutters much in our minds. The amendment will not remove responsibility for approving or licensing pilot cutters from the competent harbour authority. It does not seek to remove that which the Bill intends. The amendment merely provides that the authority should comply with the regulations for such boats that are made by the Secretary of State under section 21 of the 1979 Act. The clause is comprehensive and sets out in detail requirements for safety at sea and on board ships. If the Minister can satisfy us that the competent harbour authorities will have the relevant obligation laid upon them, I, like the hon. Gentleman, will not press the amendment to a Division.

Dr. Godman: I have no pilotage experience but I have some experience of small fishing boats. I know that a small boat that is not robust can present formidable problems for those on board when they find themselves in choppy water. I was particularly struck by the suggestion of the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), that there should be at least two crew members on small boats. I agree wholeheartedly. A small boat might be coming alongside a much bigger vessel in choppy weather, for instance—I am talking about the Clyde and the Forth, but even on an estuary such as the Humber we rarely see the sea as calm as the proverbial mill pond. Someone will be needed at the wheel, and another person will be needed to take hold of the rope ladder; a third person may also be needed.

I should also like small boats to carry an immersion suit for each of those on board, with an extra one for the pilot, in case the boat gets into difficulties. I do not know whether regulations will be brought in concerning immersion suits for small vessels — presumably those under 15 m in overall length—but I feel that such suits, and at least two crew members, are necessary for the safety of the pilot and the crew.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On Second Reading, I confirmed the undertaking by my noble Friend Lord Brabazon of Tara in the other place to bring forward proposals in regulations on the survey of pilot boats before the implementation of the Bill. That remains our intention. The Bill at present places an immediate obligation on the harbour authority to satisfy itself as to the safety of pilot boats, but the amendment would remove that obligation. It would mean that pilot boats would not be subject to any regulations at all until the regulations under the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 had been made.

I confirm to my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr.

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

Stott) that such regulations will be made. However, it will take time for our proposals to be brought forward, for the interested parties to be consulted and for the regulations to go through the appropriate statutory procedures.

The amendment would open up the possibility of a gap after the appointed day, during which boats would not be regulated at all. As has been implied by hon. Members who have spoken, it would be to everyone's benefit for the competent harbour authorities to be placed under a statutory obligation to approve pilot boats regardless of what is done under the Merchant Shipping Act. The specific duty on a CHA to satisy itself as to the suitability of pilot boats is a more stringent requirement than that contained in the existing legislation. I hope that my hon. Friend will feel able to pursue his intention to withdraw the amendment.

Dr. Godman: I know that it is not the Minister's responsibility, but, under the clause in its present form, would such vessels be subjected to annual inspections by, say, inspectors from the Department of Transport?

Mr. Spicer: Yes. — Sorry. When I answered that question, I was looking at my expert advisers and thought that I saw a nod. However, it was a shaking of the head. I withdraw my answer; in fact, that is why we are bringing forward the regulations.

Dr. Godman: I was heartened by the Minister's assurance, and I am encouraged by his honesty. However, this is a very serious matter. The owners of small fishing vessels have to submit their craft for inspection. A similar recommendation ought perhaps to be introduced for these small vessels.

Mr. Spicer: That is why the Bill imposes an obligation on the harbour authorities to ensure that they are safe. That is one of the great improvements that will be brought about by the Bill.

Mr. Thornton: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's assurance. I merely ask him, as the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 has been on the statute book for some time, to do everything in his power to expedite the procedure for bringing forward the necessary regulations.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7

PILOTAGE DIRECTIONS

9.15 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move amendment No. 33, in page 7, line 37, after 'apply' insert

'to ships of less than 20 metres in length or'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this we shall take Government amendment No. 35.

Mr. Spicer: The Bill as drafted provides for no general exemption from compulsory pilotage for pleasure craft or other small vessels. The decision about which vessels need to have pilots is best left to the competent harbour authorities. There is no reason to believe that any of them would be foolish enough to try to place a pilot on every small yacht that entered the harbour. However, as the anxieties of yachtsmen have been expressed to me and to Lord Brabazon by hon. Members on both sides, and as we believe that it is of little practical significance, we have decided to retain the exemption for the compulsory pilotage of yachts. Amendment No. 33, therefore, exempts all vessels of less than 20 m in length.

Amendment No. 35 is a drafting amendment to omit "vessels" and to insert "ships", which is the term that is used throughout the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Thornton: I beg to move amendment No. 34, in page 7, line 41, leave out paragraph *(a)*.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 83, in page 7, line 43, leave out 'other'.

No. 36, in page 7, line 44, at end insert

'and ( ) any persons representative of public bodies appearing to it to have an interest in the area to which a pilotage direction applies'.

New clause 1 — Temporary procedure for resolving disputes as to provision of pilotage directions—

' .—(1) Where any dispute arise between a competent harbour authority and any of the parties mentioned in section 7(4) above—

(a) as to what the terms of any provision in any pilotage direction should be; or

(b) as to whether the terms of any provision in any existing pilotage direction should be modified,

and that dispute cannot be resolved by negotiations between them, any of the parties to the dispute may refer the dispute to the panel appointed in accordance with subsection (2) below and the panel shall determine what the terms of that provision should be and the pilotage direction to which their determination is to apply ("relevant direction").

(2) The panel referred to in subsection (1) above shall consist of a member appointed by the Secretary of State and two members appointed respectively by a body appearing to the Secretary of State to be representative of harbour authorities throughout the United Kingdom and a body appearing to him to be representative of the owners of vessels throughout the United Kingdom.

(3) Where the panel make a determination under subsection (1) above then, subject to any agreement to the contrary between the parties and to the effect of any subsequent determination under this section—

(a) on and after the date on which the determination is made any relevant direction issued before that date shall have effect with the substitution for any inconsistent provision of a provision in the terms determined by the panel; and

(b) any relevant direction issued on or after that date shall contain a provision in those terms.

(4) Subject to the provisions of this section, the Secretary of State may by regulations make such provision as he thinks fit as respects the referral and determination of disputes under subsection (1) above and such regulations may, in particular, provide that the expenses of such referrals and determinations are to be borne by the Pilotage Commission or by such other person as the Secretary of State thinks fit.

(5) The preceding provisions of this section shall cease to have effect on such date (not being earlier than the expiry of the period of three years beginning with the appointed day) as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, but no such order shall affect the provisions of any pilotage directions continuing in force at that date.'.

Mr. Thornton: It is acknowledged that at present most harbour authorities normally have to consult the General Council of British Shipping and sometimes the pilotage authority before making or amending regulations regarding the movement and berthing of ships. It is also acknowledged that under the present pilotage law, the

Pilotage Commission has a duty to consult those persons who are likely to be affected when they fulfil their function of reviewing pilotage areas and non-compulsory areas, with an ultimate right of objection to the Secretary of State. Those duties, to consult both specifically and generally the General Council of British Shipping, really belong to an age long gone when British shipping flourished and when shipowners were based in most major ports and could be identified. That is not the case today.

British ships using British ports represent, sadly, only a very small percentage of all ships using British ports, and there are fewer British shipowners with any local base.

The Green Paper — this theme is repeated in the White Paper—tells us:

"The statutory framework and administration of pilotage should be simple, with responsibility for decisions resting at the local level as far as possible, to take account of the differing navigational hazards in different harbours."

In Committee in the other place, the Minister said:

"In addition, to give my right hon. Friend the power to override the decisions of the competent harbour authorities in this area would represent a serious dilution of the responsibility for pilotage which it is the intention of the Bill to place fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the competent harbour authorities. . . . As in the case of harbour authorities' responsibility for the safety of navigation, the responsibility for pilotage would be laid unequivocally on the harbour authorities. . . . We would immediately be back in these sterile debates which have characterised the existing system, with local issues being referred up to the national level and being bedevilled by national arguments." — [*Official Report, House of Lords, Public Bill Committee*, 9 December 1986; c. 15-16.]

It has been said that the Bill is designed to simplify the statutory framework and administration of pilotage. In a Bill designed to place responsibilities for pilotage fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the local competent harbour authority, surely it is an anachronism to perpetuate a consultation process that belongs to another age. Therefore, on that score, it is unnecessary.

Mr. Moate: Is my hon. Friend going so far as to suggest that the users of a port have nothing to contribute by way of their experience or knowledge regarding what should or should not be the pilotage requirements of a particular area?

Mr. Thornton: I am not saying that, nor am I responsible for the drafting of the Bill. My hon. Friend will appreciate that I am profoundly unhappy about many parts of the Bill. However, I am dealing with the Bill as it stands and accepting the reality of the situation. I am seeking to find an equitable course to steer between what the Government are seeking to achieve in the Bill and what I believe is a proper course regarding the competent harbour authorities' future responsibilities for pilotage areas.

I find it odd that we should have a particular provision for a special group in the Bill when, for the reasons that I have suggested, it no longer seems relevant. The Minister has said that evidence has shown that such involvement leads to "sterile debates". Such a consultation process has contributed in no small measure to the destruction of the present system.

Mr. Moate: I was directing my inquiry to my hon. Friend's first amendment, in which my hon. Friend asserts that there should not be even the necessity for consultation with the regular users of a port. In that sense, is my hon. Friend saying that he does not believe that regular users of the port have anything to contribute to the consultative process?

Mr. Thornton: If my hon. Friend had listened to what I said, he would know that the answer to that is no. I do not believe that regular users should not be allowed to contribute. Clearly they have something to say. Why has the General Council of British Shipping been singled out in this respect? I believe that that is unnecessary.

I have already said that pilotage is essentially a local matter and that consultation should be at local level only. I believe that pilotage areas — my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) discussed this when we debated amendment No. 1—are best determined at local level. Indeed, they have grown up over the years as a result of custom and practice and with regard to what is necessary in the particular area.

Under the terms of the Bill it is possible for a competent harbour authority to decide to change its pilotage area. It can do so in an almost arbitrary fashion. I believe that there should be a local input, which may well include the type of port users referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and would certainly include those local authorities that have coastal waters that may be affected by a change of pilotage areas and boundaries. Coastal authorities may face the prospect of an oil spillage or spillage from a ship carrying chemicals — there are some strange cargoes carried around our coasts at the moment.

The prospects of environmental pollution, damage or disaster are not matters that any responsible coastal authority can lightly contemplate, nor should they be excluded from any consultation process. They have the right to be consulted if a competent harbour authority decides to change the pilotage area. It is clear that the public have a vital interest in the safety of navigation in port areas. They have an interest that can be satisfied by including the amendment in the Bill.

Mr. Wallace: The group of amendments that we are discussing contains new clause 1 in my name and the names of my hon. Friends. I shall speak to that new clause later.

First, I should like to comment on some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). I certainly accept much of what he said about the involvement of the public and of interests going beyond those mentioned in the clause as it stands. I do not agree with his suggestion that the owners of vessels that customarily navigate an area should be excluded. As users, they clearly have a very direct interest in the area and no doubt they have considerable expertise. The important thing is that they customarily navigate the area, going in and out of the harbour. If they have done that for many years, they will have something worthwhile to contribute. It would be regrettable if such people were not statutorily involved.

The purpose of the new clause is to provide a safeguard against the imposition of compulsory pilotage on ships navigating within harbour limits where at present compulsory pilotage does not apply. In discussing the previous set of amendments the Minister made a concession to people with yachts. Perhaps he should consider extending this concession to the many small

[Mr. Wallace]

coastal vessels and small cargo ships that trade along our coasts and which up to now have not been subject to compulsory pilotage directions.

We are talking about making provisions that would allow the owners of such ships to be involved in an arbitration procedure if they were dissatisfied with the outcome of negotiations or consultations between the competent harbour authority and themselves. On the face of it, an exemption for ships rather than for masters—this is in clause 8—may look like something that has to be justified. The first ground on which I seek to justify it is that the practice of exemption existed even before the Pilotage Act 1913 was enacted and there does not appear to be any evidence that that has in any way impaired safety over that long period.

We are also talking about ships that regularly ply the coast and use harbours. Obviously, the masters of such ships use the harbours. There are many harbours, and it is almost impossible to suggest that a master should be allowed an exemption certificate for each of the harbours that he has to navigate in the course of a year.

A further important consideration is that cost of pilotage for a fairly small ship can be high. Some estimates put it as high as 30 per cent. of the entire voyage revenue. We have heard many complaints over recent months about the increasing problems that the British merchant fleet is facing. These ships are under the British flag, and to put another imposition on them, in some cases perhaps as much as 30 per cent. of their entire voyage revenue, would be seen by many people as another hurdle to be overcome and another pressure contributing to the diminution of the British fleet. The new clause proposes that there should be some form of arbitration, and the scheme of arbitration suggested is the one that was originally in clause 5 before it was amended. The new clause would probably pass the legislative test and be a competent provision. I hope that the Minister will give serious consideration to that, because a competent harbour authority would effectively have a monopoly and be able to impose compulsory pilotage in the event of a disagreement.

All that we ask and all that the new clause seeks is that, where disagreements exist and exemptions have not been forthcoming, there should at least be some independent arbitration to resolve such matters. I hope that the Minister will respond in positive terms.

9.30 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I find some merit and attraction in new clause 1. I rise to seek clarification and to ask about the effects of amendments Nos. 34, 83 and 36 on the procedures that would follow subsequent to a decision by a competent harbour authority to extend the powers of compulsory pilotage.

There appears to be a strange anomaly in that if the competent harbour authority wishes to extend compulsory pilotage outside the harbour area it has no direct powers to do so, but must seek a harbour revision order which, under the Harbours Act 1964, as I understand it, is granted by the Secretary of State and is subject to an appeals procedure. Therefore, the owners of vessels that are affected by this and that will be affected in cost terms by the imposition of compulsory pilotage would have a straightforward appeals procedure and the ability to object to someone who was not a concerned party with the making of the order.

However, oddly, when the competent harbour authority seeks to extend compulsory pilotage within the harbour, the Bill provides for consultation with the owners of vessels and other persons who carry on harbour operations. I am sure that that is valuable, but it appears to be markedly less helpful to the operators of vessels than are the provisions that apply outside, where there is a third and independent party, the Secretary of State. After all, the right to be consulted by a competent harbour authority, which is itself already committed to extending the powers of compulsory pilotage, does not seem to confer much opportunity on the operators of vessels to object to such an order.

New Clause 1 may well get round that by providing a system for arbitration which appears to be more fair. However, before deciding my attitude to the new clause and, indeed, to the amendments that have been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). I should like the Minister to explain why he considers it essential that we have a system of appeals outside the harbour area, whereas we only have consultation within the harbour.

Dr. Godman: I have some sympathy with new clause 1. However, I must express some reservations about amendment No. 34 because it seeks the deletion of subsection (4)*(a)* which refers to

"the owners of vessels which customarily navigate in the area to which the proposed direction would apply."

There is no mention of the General Council of British Shipping. I think that that is what the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) said in response to an intervention by his hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate).

My reservation is that such interested parties have a right to be consulted. Only today I received a letter from Captain Leitch, director of J. and A. Gardner and Co. Ltd. shipowners in Glasgow, which refers to the wide experience of his firm in passages between Cairnryan and Faslane on the Clyde. Such a firm should be consulted by the relevant competent harbour authority, but this amendment would deny it that opportunity.

Incidentally, Captain Leitch seeks to discipline me for misleading the House recently. He refers specifically to my reservations about this amendment and states:

"You stated that no vessel of over 500 tonnes can proceed along the channel past the entrance to the Holy Loch without a pilot because of stringent local regulations."

This is where his company's experience and knowledge comes in—

"This is totally misleading and incorrect as we have vessels at present whose Masters/Mates hold pilotage certificates trading every day from Cairnryan to Faslane."

I am pleased to put Captain Leitch's stricture on the record because I did not mean to mislead the House. His firm has years of experience of navigation on the Clyde, to such an extent that its captains and mates have exemption certificates.

I have listened with great sympathy to many of the speeches of the hon. Member for Crosby tonight, but such a shipping company has every right to be consulted under the clause. Captain Leitch continues:

"The regulations for this area state that any vessel over 100 tonnes requires a pilot but the Master/Mate of such a vessel can also hold a pilotage certificate to cover the upper reaches of the River Clyde."

Firms with that sort of everyday involvement in the traffic on the River Clyde cannot be denied consultation.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend on being so honest about misleading the House, but he is being rather hard on himself. What he said was absolutely correct: a vessel would not be allowed to ply without a pilot. The company has assumed the pilot to be an external pilot, but providing the master has a pilot's certificate, he is the pilot.

Dr. Godman: As always, my hon. Friend has shown his innate kindness and courtesy, and I am grateful for it.

Without labouring the point, shipping firms that use the Clyde, the Forth, the Humber, the Thames, the Dee or the Don on a regular basis must have some recourse to consultations with competent harbour authorities. I hate to say this, but in this case the hon. Gentleman has sailed into danger with this amendment.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): I support the hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on the necessity to consult competent shipping companies about this matter.

I should like to report to the Minister a slightly more optimistic situation under the Bill on pilotage on the Humber. At present pilotage is compulsory throughout the Humber district. That does not mean that every ship must take a pilot. Certain classes of small ships are exempt from compulsion and exemption certificates are available to some masters who navigate frequently in the district and who pass an examination of their competence in local knowledge.

Associated British Ports, which is the competent harbour authority there, will be seeking to preserve this principle of compulsory pilotage for all but the smallest vessels. However, we believe that, with the possible exception of vessels carrying dangerous and hazardous cargoes, many ships which regularly trade in the Humber should be able to qualify for certificates. It will be necessary for masters to pass an examination in competence and local knowledge, and some proficiency in the English language is obviously required.

On Second Reading I pointed out how highly successful the wharves on the Trent and the Humber are. Some of these suggest there is no need for compulsory pilotage downstream from Hull since, in contrast with the higher waters, the navigation is comparatively straightforward. Therefore this argument is put forward by some of those using Goole, Gainsborough and so on. They will obviously be consulted, but at the end of the day I do not think that the harbour authority is going to be able to let up much on its side.

Mr. Moate: I am sure that those affected will be grateful for the assurances that my hon. Friend is relaying to them, but the point of the new clause, as has already been mentioned, is that the port authority should not be judge and jury in these matters. If, for example, ABP or any other port authority were to seek to extend compulsory pilotage to smaller vessels, is my hon. Friend saying that it is right that that authority—ABP in this particular case—should be judge and jury?

Sir Paul Bryan: I am reporting on the situation as it is now and, as almost complete compulsory pilotage operates on the Humber now, any change would be in the other direction altogether, so I do not think that there are great fears.

We must be so cautious on the lower Humber—every hon. Member has his own river to think about—because of the very wide variety of vessels there. As well as the general run of cargo vessels there are numerous tankers carrying gas and oil products, and there are passenger ferries. Of course, some of the passenger ferries do have certificates. The speed of vessels, as well as their size and type, varies tremendously, and then there is the variety of traffic in the presence of substantial petro-chemical installations. All these things make this area a dangerous one, although so far it has been a safe one.

The greater difficulty ahead of us is that now the wharves are going to be, shall I say, under the authority of the harbour authorities. They think that they are going to have very much less flexible arrangements than they have been used to. These arrangements are very important indeed to these wharves. It is the duty of the harbour authority now that it is in charge to preserve both the flexibility and the safety.

Mr. Moate: I support fundamentally the principles of this legislation, but there is a sense of disappointment that we have not been able to achieve a certain number of changes that would improve it somewhat. I suspect that I am not alone in feeling somewhat frustrated by the procedures that we are following at this time. I do not think that the House of Commons is ever particularly happy when it is playing second fiddle to the other House. That House has worked very hard on this legislation, but it does mean that by the time it gets to us there is almost a sense of having exhausted every opportunity of lobbying the Minister and seeking concessions. Furthermore, taking the procedure on the Floor of the House and taking all stages in a few hours means that there is very little chance of being able to persuade the Minister, by the force of argument or perhaps even the weight of numbers, to make a concession even at a later stage, because the later stages this evening are rather academic.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Would my hon. Friend note that on the first Division there was a great flurry in the Chamber and the Whips were sent all over London to bring Members back? Does he not take some heart from that?

Mr. Moate: I do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) has established an even greater reputation for rebellion and for causing worry on the Government Front Bench. Alas, even then the Government had a majority of about 40 on the amendment while in Standing Committee they might have had a majority of only four. That concentrates Ministers' minds more acutely than this evening's proceedings.

9.45 pm

Amendment No. 34 and the amendments that accompany it illustrate my point. I believe that we have a strong case for at least an appeal procedure in the early stages of this new legislation. I suspect that the Minister has only to say no and that will be the end of the matter. We will not be able to squeeze anything out of him and we

[Mr. Moate]

will get no concessions. A vote will result in a substantial Government majority. That is the way of life and what faces us at the moment. However, that is not the best way to carry this legislation through.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will listen carefully to our arguments and bear in mind how many hon. Members have spoken tonight in support of the proposition that here should be some appeal broadly against the imposition of new compulsory pilotage directions, at least in the early years. If a competent harbour authority at some time is unreasonable—and, in the nature of things, local authorities and harbour authorities can be unreasonable—and imposes byelaws which some shipowners consider to be unreasonable, those shipowners will go to the Minister and ask what they can do because the harbour authority is imposing compulsory pilotage on small vessels going to that port and the costs are threatening to put the owner out of business. What can the shipowner do? The shipowner will ask the Minister because he believes that the Minister has given monopoly power to that harbour authority.

What will the Minister say? He will say, "Well, there is a consultation requirement in the Act." That is all very well, and consultation is very helpful. However, if consultation has taken place and the users claim that the action is unreasonable, yet the harbour authority still introduces the new regulation imposing pilotage direction, the Minister will say, "I am very sorry. Ultimately that port will learn the folly of its ways and business will be lost." However, that is no consolation to the shipowner who in the meantime may have gone out of business or suffered a loss of trade. After all, a shipowner cannot switch from one port to another. He must take the goods where the shipper or geography dictates that they should be taken.

There is no appeal procedure in such circumstances. I cannot understand why my hon. Friend, representing a Government who believe in competition, is prepared to give a monopoly power to authorities which might not always behave reasonably, without any recourse or right to appeal. New clause 1 contains a sensible and fair arrangement, at least for an interim period. I am very disappointed that we have seen no sign that the Minister is prepared to give any ground on that.

We want clear responsibility transferred to the harbour authorities and we want it to be taken out of the area of governmental decision. I agree with those aims. However, we are now moving into a new era. We have conceded temporary arbitration procedures for pilots. Is it not reasonable that we should provide temporary transitional arbitration or appeal procedures for shippers or shipowners entering those ports? I would have thought that that was eminently reasonable. However, we have had no sign of any concessions. I am very disappointed about that.

I do not think that there is an awareness by my hon. Friend—and I am sure that this is unintentional on his part — of the battles that many of those shipping companies have had to endure to survive. The sheer burden of costs makes it exceedingly difficult for many shipping companies to survive, especially those operating the smaller coastal vessels. Those companies have used tremendous initiative and cost-cutting techniques to remain in business. If an unreasonable port authority imposed pilotage requirements on smaller vessels, some of those shipping companies could be put out of business at a time when we are all desperate for our Merchant Navy to survive and, indeed, expand. I do not think that my hon. Friend the Minister has made any helpful move to assist companies that are worried about the possibilities of having unreasonable burdens imposed on them. I hope that my hon. Friend can reassure me that my fears are misplaced. He should find some way of providing reassurance.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Mine will be perhaps the briefest contribution because much of what I want to say has been eloquently expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Faversham (Mr. Moate) and for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) who put a reasonable case for the setting up of an appeal procedure. Consultation is one thing; appeal is another. The Bill is not fair and equitable in that respect.

I talked today with a shipowner who said that perhaps 90 per cent. of the Bill is right, but there is still an unknown quantity. This measure dramatically changes the position of pilotage harbour authorities. There should be an appeal procedure for at least a temporary trial period while the legislation settles down. I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to give a concession in the direction of the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

Mr. Michael Spicer: My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) was a little unfair. We have been giving away concessions like confetti. The thrust of the Government amendments is that they have conceded various points raised by hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham was particularly punchy in his criticisms of this aspect of the Bill, although I am grateful for the fact that he did so from a basic position of supporting the thrust of the Bill.

The legislation is by no means lopsided and unfair to the shipowner. We are dealing with one aspect of the Bill — compulsory pilotage — but, when we deal with exemption certificates, it will be argued that we are being far too hard on the pilots because we are introducing arrangements whereby exemption certificates must be issued so that safety and other factors can be guaranteed. Under the compulsory pilotage arrangements, shipowners will also have an appeal procedure which can consider charging, for instance. The Bill is by no means lopsided and unfair, as my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham described it.

I come to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths). The distinction between the consultation required within the harbour area and outside it springs from the fact that within the harbour area the competent harbour authority is already the authority responsible for safety and other navigation factors. We believe that consultation is appropriate. If the competent harbour authority aims to go outside the harbour area in terms of compulsory pilotage, it should be subject to an appeals procedure, and the procedures of the House of Commons, should that become necessary.

Amendment No. 34 removes the requirement on competent harbour authorities to consult the shipowners who will be directly affected by the arrangements that they make for compulsory pilotage. A harbour authority is

always required to consult shipowners in the exercise of its other functions in relation to safety of navigation, such as the power to direct the movement of shipping in its harbours. I cannot see any serious case for not requiring the competent harbour authority to consult the shipowners about the introduction of compulsory pilotage.

The Government believe, however, that the new clause proposed by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), and supported by others, goes too far in the other direction. It would apply an arbitration procedure to any dispute that arose between the competent harbour authority and the port users about a pilotage direction introducing compulsory pilotage. The fundamental principle of the Bill is that the final decision is the clear responsibility of the competent harbour authority once it has carried out consultation. There is an argument about that, but the responsibility has to rest somewhere.

I do not believe there is a case to be made for wider consultation under amendment No. 36. It does not seem sensible to write in a statutory right to consult bodies or groups that lack any knowledge of navigational safety. There is no similar obligation to consult about the exercise of a harbour authority's other functions, and there is no such obligation in the existing legislation on pilotage. For those reasons, I ask that this amendment be withdrawn or rejected.

Mr. Thornton: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 35, in page 7, line 41, leave out 'vessels' and insert 'ships'.—*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Mr. Thornton: I beg to move amendment No. 37, in page 7, line 46, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

'( ) A competent harbour authority shall have jurisdiction for the purpose of pilotage over the area which immediately before the appointed day was a pilotage district which included the area of that authority.

( ) A pilotage direction shall not specify an area other than an area which immediately before the appointed day was a pilotage district unless a harbour revision order has been made under section 14 of the Harbours Act 1964 or, in Northern Ireland, a harbour order has been made under section 1 of the Harbours Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, to alter the limit of the area in respect of which the direction is to apply.

( ) Schedule (Altered Areas) shall have effect in relation to harbour revision orders under subsection ( ) above.'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 82—schedule—

'ALTERED AREAS

1. Where a harbour authority, which proposes on or after the appointed day to direct that pilotage shall be compulsory for ships navigating in an area other than an area in which pilotage is compulsory by virtue of an order under section 9(1)(i) of the Pilotage Act 1983 applies before that day for the making of the harbour revision order—

(a) paragraphs 3 to 5 of Schedule 3 to the Harbours Act 1964 (procedural requirements for making harbour revision orders) shall not apply;

(b) before making the order the Secretary of State shall consult such persons as appear to him to be affected by it; and

(c) if the draft order extends the limits of the authority's jurisdiction into the area of another harbour authority's jurisdiction and any person consulted by the Secretary of State under paragraph *(b)* above objects to the making of the order the Secretary of State may modify the order so that the limits of the authority's jurisdiction do not extend into that of the other authority.

(d) after the making of the order the direction shall apply to the area within the authority's limits of jurisdiction as extended by the order, notwithstanding that the order is not yet in force.'.

Mr. Thornton: This amendment on the theme of safety in our coastal waters is very important and will ensure that pilotage districts and consultative procedures are complied with. These procedures are outlined in the consequential amendment before schedule 1, Altered Areas. The effect of the Bill as drafted is to limit compulsory pilotage to the areas presently defined as port areas or parts of such areas. In some cases this will mean a contraction of such areas which could leave sensitive and navigationally hazardous parts of our coast and estuaries unguarded, notably the Thames and Mersey estuaries. Pilotage services will not be available where ships first begin to look for them. That has been a major criterion whenever pilotage legislation has been considered. In days gone by this was the most sensible criterion because the lack and fallibility of navigational aids were factors which are not of real relevance today.

But the criterion is as valid today as it ever was. The size of ships and in particular their draught, which when entering some ports can be 70 feet, nearly 12 fathoms, or more; the nature of some of the cargo carried and the consequences of an incident involving such ships; the manning standards, both in a qualitative and numerical sense; and the increasing commercial pressures that are employed—this could well be a recipe for disaster. The incompetent and the foolhardly—as we see all too often in incidents around our coast — will be tempted, especially in bad weather, when navigation in shallow enclosed waters is at its most difficult and proper or alternative pilotage services will not be available, to navigate their vessels into areas where their skill, experience and local knowledge will be wholly inadequate.

The Bill makes provision for a competent harbour authority to be able to propose to extend the area in which pilotage should be compulsory outside its harbour limits, providing that it is an area in which pilotage is presently compulsory, and for that to be effected on the appointed day. It will be done by means of a modified harbour revision order procedure, which has to be by order, and the Secretary of State, before refusing, approving or amending same, has to consult such persons as appear to him to be affected by it. All this will take time, because the competent harbour authorities will be taking on new responsibilities which will require a great deal of consideration. Yet the Bill——

It being Ten o'clock, THE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Pilotage Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Pilotage Bill *[Lords]*

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Thornton: Yet the Bill in clause 33(3) puts a minimum period of only nine months between the passing

[Mr. Thornton]

of the Act and the coming into force of part I which includes the appointed day. I suggest that this is not enough time. According to the Green Paper,

"Our modern pilotage service is second to none in the skills deployed and the preparedness of pilots to meet and serve the ships using our ports".

It seems strange that this well proven system is to be more or less destroyed and is to be retained only through a bureaucratic consultative procedure.

Our amendment is designed to ensure that the present pilotage areas are retained and can be changed only through the modified harbour revision order procedure outlined. This would give proper time for due consideration of the important matters and for the necessary local consultation to take place. I believe that it is absolutely imperative that we do not allow a position to arise whereby existing compulsory pilotage areas can be wiped out by the Bill on the appointed day without consideration. It would be inconceivable if pilotage around our coasts was to be inhibited without proper and adequate consideration. This ties in very much with my earlier remarks about the responsibility of hon. Members and of the Government for seeing that safety of navigation in our waters is paramount. I believe that the amendment would go a long way to ensuring that.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We dealt with this matter in detail earlier when discussing amendments Nos. 1, 2, 4, and 45 which were tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale). As I said then, we believe that it would be wrong to take existing pilotage boundaries as a starting point for the new regime.

The only additional point I should like to make is that the competent harbour authorities are already responsible for other safety matters in their ports. It is logical and proper that they be trusted to impose a safe pilotage regime. Of course, the Bill provides a means by which a competent harbour authority can readily provide services beyond its existing harbour limits if that is necessary. That should meet the worries about hazards to navigation beyond those limits that my hon. Friend has raised.

For that reason and the reason I gave earlier, I ask that the amendment be withdrawn.

Mr. Thornton: I have listened carefully to what the Minister has said on this and the earlier amendments.

For the reasons which we expressed in the first debate, I feel that nothing in the Bill, nothing as presently drafted and nothing that the Minister has said convinces me that we are not entering troubled waters with regard to pilotage areas.

I will therefore press the amendment to a Division.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 7, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 8

PILOTAGE EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

Mr. Thornton: I beg to move amendment No. 38, in page 8, line 11, leave out 'shall' and insert 'may'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 39 and amendment No. 40, in page 8, line 42, at end insert—

'(4A) A competent harbour authority may, on granting a pilotage exemption certificate, restrict the use of that certificate, having regard to the carriage by ship or specific goods or substances which are reasonably believed to be dangerous or harmful.'.

Mr. Thornton: This amendment refers to exemption certificates. I should say at the outset that the proposed change—the word "shall" to "may"—is anything but a semantic change. It is a change of considerable importance. It is a change which is in the interests of the competent harbour authorities.

As the clause is written, the competent harbour authority will not be able to refuse the issue of a pilotage exemption certificate, for whatever reason, provided it is satisfied as to an applicant's skill, experience and local knowledge and, where it appears necessary that the applicant's knowledge of English is sufficient. It will not be able to exercise any discretion, no matter what the circumstances are.

One of the effects of the amendment will be to expose our coastal and short-sea ships to some of the influences that have already decimated our deep-sea merchant fleet and put British officers' jobs at risk on, for example, ferries which operate around our shores. It will result in an undoubted reduction in efficiency and safety standards. As far as we are aware, British ships are not afforded similar benefits on the Continent, America or elsewhere in the world. Indeed, they are not in the accepted sense allowed to trade on the coast elsewhere.

In response to this amendment in the other place the Minister, among other things, said:

"As to allowing CHAs to have discretion in issuing certificates to vessels carrying dangerous cargoes, I do not agree that a CHA should be allowed to restrict the issue of certificates for such vessels since the cargo has little bearing on the competence of the master to navigate his vessel . . . To allow them to be witheld on any grounds other than the competence of the master or mate involved means that unnecessary costs have to be borne by shipping . . . The CHA may apply a direction to all ships or to all ships of a certain description and this will allow a CHA to take into account considerations such as whether a vessel is carrying passengers or hazardous cargoes." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 February 1987; Vol .484, c.838.]

I shall deal with those three points in reverse order. First, it is misleading to state, in the context of the issuance of pilotage certificates, that a CHA will be able to take into account considerations such as whether a vessel is carrying passengers or hazardous cargoes. It will not. The use of the word "shall" removes any discretion in the matter.

Secondly, there are many grounds to be considered other than the competence of the master. For example, in an economic sense, in the smallish ports where there is an ongoing but quite irregular demand for pilotage services, it may be that a certain volume of work is required for pilotage so that it is not prohibitively expensive for the few ships requiring it.

On practical grounds, there are many ports where the mix of ships is very large, varying from fishing vessels to very large crude carriers, and where the channels are narrow. For a port to operate efficiently, ideally ships must not be delayed. Large vessels need so much room to manouevre and are so slow to respond to initiated actions that it is frequently beyond the comprehension of small ship masters. To have to issue pilotage exemption certificates under such circumstances may marginally reduce the cost for the small ships, but will reduce the overall efficiency of the port and possibly increase the

costs for the large ship. That is so because in this case there would be no alternative for the harbourmaster but to use his negative powers and to stop either the large ship from moving or several smaller ones. That is already happening in some ports where ships are exempted through size, or whatever, from the requirement to take pilots.

Thirdly, it may very well be that the cargo has little bearing on the competence of the master to handle his vessel. However, because handling one's vessel competently and efficiently in the confines of a port requires full knowledge of the handling characteristics of all the vessels as they interact with each other, when the consequences of an incident on life in the urban areas and the environment are high, the modest cost of a belt and braces attitude is a must. Recent tragedies have demonstrated how familiarity in the marine environment can end in disaster.

Mr. Roderick Macleod, the chairman of Lloyd's Register of Shipping, said recently:

"Even if absolute safety were achievable it could not be assumed that the commercial world would be able or willing to accept the cost of achieving it."

On some ships, masters may serve continuously for six months or even a year without enough officers. They may work 12 hours to 16 hours a day. That leads to tiredness, and competent harbour authorities should have the ability to exercise discretion to take into consideration the manning levels on the bridges of ships. The clause as drafted will prevent that.

Ship regimes can and do become very insular and are rarely if ever the subject of checks. That can quickly lead to bad practices. It is in the interests of the shippers and of the harbour authorities that they should have this authority and discretion, which is denied to them under the Bill. I believe that it is in the interests of everyone connected with pilotage that the amendment be accepted.

10.15 pm

Dr. Godman: The amendment should commend itself to the Committee. The applicants for an exemption certificate should be subjected to a tough examination. Such applicants must have what has been called a "reasonable grasp" of English, and must possess local knowledge. How are they to acquire that local knowledge?

The clause contains other worrying features. The honorary secretary of the Scottish Guild of Pilots wrote to me to express his concern, and that of his colleagues, about the clause. He said:

"Ship manning continues to be reduced in both numbers and, in some instances, standards, and yet new proposed legislation makes it incumbent upon CHAs to grant exemption certificates to bona fide masters and first mates of any nationality of any ship of any flag provided such persons comply with standards which must not be unduly onerous."

I believe that those standards should be tough and onerous before a certificate is granted to an applicant. Mr. Harrigan continues:

"Many masters and first mates have, on arrival in pilotage areas, been on duty for many hours often in adverse weather and are tired and stressed and should not be required to undertake pilotage duties."

That underlines what was said by the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton).

When there is a dangerous cargo and a competent harbour authority has no real control over the working conditions of masters and mates of vessels—foreign or domestic—the authority should have the discretion to introduce tough standards by which to assess applicants, and the discretion to refuse applicants a certificate when they do not come up to those — rightly tough — standards.

Mr. Wallace: I wish to speak to amendment No. 40, which stands in my name. It echoes the words of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), to the extent that it seeks to substitute the word "may" for "shall", which will allow the competent harbour authorities to take account of some of the dangerous substances that may come into their harbours. That would be welcome, and amendment No. 40 was designed specifically with that purpose in mind. It is clear that in many areas in which exemptions might be allowed there are hazardous substances, such as nuclear waste, oil products and gaseous products, all of which, if something goes wrong, are hazardous to the surrounding community. It is only right that, if a harbour authority is granting an exemption certificate, it should be able to exclude its use in circumstances where the master or mate is in control of a ship which is carrying such substances. It is an important consideration and I hope, somewhat forlornly, that the Minister might be able to respond to it positively.

Government amendment No. 39 is designed to meet the circumstances which were put to the Minister by the Orkney Islands council. Under subsection (3) it should be possible, when a direction is made, for an exemption certificate to be issed to particular ships in particular areas. Having anticipated the nature of the amendment, I wish to express my appreciation of it.

Mr. Stott: I said on Second Reading that clause 8 and the exemption certificates caused my right hon. and hon. Friends and I some difficulty. As the clause is constructed, it is unacceptable. I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and I agree with every word that he uttered about the certificates.

In the form in which the Bill was first drafted, before it went to another place, some of the exemption provisions were even more slackly drawn than they are now. It is perhaps a reflection of my inability to get a grip on the Bill in the short time that I have had available to me that I have been unable to table amendments to the exemption provisions.

Those of us who have been in this place for a reasonable period will recognise readily that "may" and "shall" amendments often produce filibustering, or at least prolonged debate, but I shall not use that tactic this evening. In this instance I believe that we are right in what we are doing.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): What are we doing?

Mr. Stott: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the hon. Member for Crosby, he would know exactly what we are doing. He has only recently entered the Chamber and now he asks what we are doing. Some of us have been in the Chamber since 6.15 pm discussing many important issues. I think that the hon. Gentleman should be a little less forthright in his sedentary interjections.

We are discussing whether a competent harbour authority may, on the flimsiest of excuses, grant pilotage exemption certificates. Do we know what we are talking about when we talk about the granting of pilotage exemption certificates? The reality is that masters or mates will be able to bring ships into any harbour or port in the

[Mr. Stott]

United Kingdom, provided that they satisfy some spurious exemption provisions that are encapsulated in the Bill. I do not consider that to be a sound principle.

In case the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) does not know, I happen to have had some experience of these matters. For many years I was a quartermaster to pilots as the ships on which I served entered and left the United Kingdom. I was also a quartermaster on ships as they entered and left foreign ports. For a fairly long period I served on a ship that sailed from Liverpool to Montreal. The St. Lawrence river is certainly longer than any river in Britain. There are four pilots on the St. Lawrence river going from the top all the way down to Montreal, and there are pilots who go further down the St. Lawrence seaway and into the great lakes.

When I kept watch on that river—no matter how many times I went down the same stretch—the pilotage, the directions and the orders from the pilots were different on every occasion, because different activities were taking place on the river; dredging, silting, and so on. The circumstances are constantly changing. Nothing is ever the same on any two occasions. No matter how many times —as a master, a mate or a helmsman—a sailor enters or leaves the harbour, weather and other conditions are always different. It is therefore essential that someone aboard the ship is conversant with the differences obtaining at any given time, and I believe that person should be a qualified pilot.

As I said on Second Reading, I do not wish to put any obstruction in the way of those who already have exemption certificates. Of course, some people, such as ferry operators who go in and out of harbours every day of the week, should not be inhibited. That regime would continue under the amendment. However, it seems to me — and a qualified pilot would agree — that the Committee should avoid opening it up to any flag and any person.

If there is no pilot, the shipowners or the port operators may save some money. I assure the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) that I am concerned about shipping costs and about the deterioration of the British merchant fleet. But if we really want to save money, we need not do it by introducing this measure. We could save port authorities and shipowners some money by persuading the Government to do away with light dues, which cost the ports and shipping the massive levy of £48 million. Light dues could be paid for through the central Exchequer. It is clear that the Exchequer has a considerable amount to spend, because the Chancellor gave away £3 million in the Budget a couple of weeks ago.

This is a serious matter. As I have said this evening and on Second Reading, responsible masters and first mates could easily be given exemption certificates to bring ships into United Kingdom ports. Others, however, should not have the exemption as the Bill describes it.

The tragedy of the Herald of Free Enterprise is on all our minds. In my capacity as the official Opposition spokesman for maritime affairs, I received an unsolicited letter from the wife of the serving master of one of those ferries—not the Herald of Free Enterprise. The letter set out in detail the number of hours that that lady's husband worked when he was on duty. The hours are long and arduous, and in some circumstances could prove dangerous. We may return to that subject if we debate another merchant shipping Bill. If that is happening to a British master operating one of our ferries on the Continent, the same conditions could apply to others on ro-ro ships operating between the United Kingdom and the Continent or the Mediterranean.

I know about the hours, because I worked them. Seamen, masters and mates performing their duties between one port and another can go for literally 24 hours without sleep. Are we going to give exemption certificates to masters who are working under such strenuous conditions when entering and leaving United Kingdom ports? We should not do that. The word "may" should be changed to "shall", because that would strengthen the Bill.

10.30 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: I agree with the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) that much of the Second Reading debate focused on pilotage exemption certificates. Therefore, the Committee knows that the Government do not accept that the proposal involves any risk to safety.

A competent harbour authority has to satisfy itself that the master's skill, experience and, above all, local knowledge are sufficient to enable him to pilot the ship within the authority's harbour. The master must be capable of bringing in the ship as safely as a local pilot. If the competent harbour authority is not satisfied that he can safely do so, it will not issue a certificate. I emphasise that local knowledge is one of the points about which a competent harbour authority is required to satisfy itself. A master will therefore have to visit a port sufficiently regularly to obtain that knowledge before he will be given a certificate.

Clause 8(5) provides:

"A pilotage exemption certificate shall not remain in force for more than one year".

Therefore, a master has to meet those stringent requirements at least every year.

It has been suggested that foreign masters should be required to take on pilots as a substitute for reserving cabotage. The hon. Member for Wigan stressed that point on Second Reading. However, that would be an ineffective way of discriminating to protect cabotage. One certain consequence is that it would raise the cost of trading in and out of our ports.

Mr. Stott: That is nonsense.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman says that that is nonsense, but he did not deny on Second Reading that certain costs would be involved. It is a question whether he thinks that the costs connected with that part of the argument would help to reserve cabotage.

Amendment No. 40 proposes that the use of certificates should be restricted if a ship is carrying dangerous goods. We believe that only in very exceptional circumstances can it be argued that a ship needs both a master who is totally familiar with the port and a local pilot. Cases of that kind are covered by subsection (3), which gives the Secretary of State power to relieve a competent harbour authority of the normal obligation to issue a certificate in exceptional circumstances. Apart from those circumstances, we believe that, if unnecessary port costs are to be avoided, there must be a general obligation on the competent harbour authorities to issue pilotage exemption certificates to masters who meet the requirements that they set for their ports.

Dr. Godman: Subsection (1)(*b*) refers to a sufficient knowledge of English. Would applicants be given both an oral and a written examination?

Mr. Spicer: That would be up to the competent harbour authorities. Their views about testing differ, but in order to meet the statutory requirements they have to satisfy themselves that knowledge of the English language is adequate. How they should test is left to their discretion. I visited Harwich recently, and my impression was that the criteria will be much more strictly examined than they have been in the past.

Mr. Wallace: Rather than accept amendment No. 40, the Minister said that clause 8(3) allowed the Secretary of State to give directions that excluded the use of exemption certificates. However, my understanding of clause 8(3) is that it relates to unusual navigational hazards rather than to substances carried by vessels. Is that an unreasonable distinction to make?

Mr. Spicer: Clause 8(33) also deals with dangerous substances. No doubt we shall discuss clause 8(3) in detail shortly. However, I stress that matters are covered both in terms of hazards and dangerous substances.

Government amendment No. 39 makes it clear that, where the Secretary of State issues a direction to cover unusual hazards in the harbour, the competent harbour authority will still be able to issue certificates if it is satisfied about the master's capability. However, it will not be obliged to do so.

I ask the Committee to reject amendments Nos. 38 and 40 and to approve Government amendment No. 39.

Mr. Thornton: I should like to press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 12, Noes 79.

Division No. 145] **[10.35 pm**

AYES

Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Nellist, David
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Malcolm Thornton and
Dr. Norman A. Godman.

NOES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brinton, Tim
Bryan, Sir Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cash, William
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Norris, Steven
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: No. 39, in page 8, line 34, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) If the Secretary of State is satisfied, on application by a competent harbour authority, that it is appropriate to do so by reason of the unusual hazards involved in shipping movements within its harbour, he may direct that during such period (not exceeding three years) as he may specify, not withstanding that the authority is satisfied as mentioned in subsection (1) above, it may refuse to grant pilotage exemption certificates under that subsection.'. — *[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Clause 8, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

10.45 pm

Clause 10

PILOTAGE CHARGES

Amendment proposed: No. 41, in page 9, line 31, at end insert

'or the ship does not arrive or depart at the notified time,. —*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to consider amendments Nos. 42 and 44.

Mr. Wallace: I wish to speak briefly to amendment No. 42, which seeks to leave out clause 10(3). It is essentially a probing amendment to find out why a vessel which comes into port without a pilot, but under the control of a master or mate who has an exemption certificate, would be charged. Clause 8, which deals with the granting of exemption certificates provides for the covering of the proper administrative charge, which goes with the application of such an exemption certificate. Therefore, it does not seem right that if no use is made of the pilot services, there should nevertheless, be a charge.

I can understand that an argument may be made that there will be occasions, possible in exceptionally bad weather, when vessels which have a master with an exemption certificate may wish to make use of pilot services. Of course, that service must be available throughout the year and around the clock. However, it appears that there are two categories of users—regular users and occasional users. The occasional users are likely to be in need of pilot services as often as the regular user who has an exemption certificate and who would require it on exceptional occasions. The occasional user has to pay only when he has to make use of the pilot services.

[Mr. Wallace]

Likewise, why should that not also be the case for the master or mate with an exemption certificate? An explanation for the charge is required.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: I too should like to query the effect of subsection (3) and, to that extent, I wish to speak in support of amendment No. 42.

I understand that in other transport matters the Government have sought to root out cross-subsidisation. It is said that those who use the service should bear the cost of it. If there is a social reason why they cannot meet that cost, it should be met from other public funds, and not by other transport users. The effect of clause 10(3) is that a ship with a competent pilot on board, whether the captain or the mate who holds an exemption certificate, shall still be subject to a charge. That is a form of cross-subsidisation which I would have thought was anathema to the Government. For that reason, I find it difficult to understand why my hon. Friend the Minister is not leaping to his feet to accept the amendment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are two schools of thought on this and we do not have a dogmatic view. First, there is the cost of issuing exemption certificates regularly and, secondly, such ships benefit from the improvement in safety which a well-run pilotage service means for the ports. Therefore, on balance we believe that they should share the cost.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 12

INFORMATION AND DIRECTIONS AS TO JOINT ARRANGEMENTS

Amendments made: No. 46, in page 11, line 12, after 'authority', insert—

'*(cc)* there is any person who carries on harbour operations in a harbour (within the meaning of the Harbours Act 1964) which is not the harbour of a competent harbour authority and access to which is customarily available through the harbour of a competent harbour authority; or'.

No. 47, in page 11, line 19, after '*(c)*' insert ', *(cc)*'. —*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Clause 12, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 13

RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES BETWEEN AUTHORITIES

Amendments made: No. 48, in page 11, line 49, after '*(c)*', insert ', *(cc)*'.

No. 49, in page 12, line 1, leave out 'in question' and insert

'of the competent harbour authority'. — *[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Clause 13, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 14 to 16 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 17

RIGHT OF AUTHORISED PILOT TO SUPERSEDE UNAUTHORISED PILOT

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I beg to move amendment No. 51, in page 14, line 14, leave out 'a ship or'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 52, in page 14, line 16, leave out 'a ship or'.

No. 53, in page 14, line 21, at end insert

'and the authority, in determining whether or not to make a direction under paragraph *(b)* above in respect of ships of any description, shall have regard in particular to their size and the nature of the cargoes they carry or may carry'.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: These amendments seek to ensure that any direction given by a competent harbour authority with regard to movements within its harbour must take account of the size of the ship to which a direction applies and the nature of its cargo. That will place an obligation on CHAs to give weight to safety consideration when issuing directions which allow an unauthorised pilot to take charge of a vessel when shifting within the port.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These amendments are unnecessary. The provisions of the Bill already allow for CHAs to make the necessary directions only in respect of some ships if they wish. The term "ship of a specified description" is wide enough to allow them to consider the size of ship and the nature of its cargo. That meets the anxiety behind my hon. Friend's amendment, so we would ask him to withdraw it.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 17 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 18 to 23 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 24

ABOLITION OF PILOTAGE AUTHORITIES

Amendments made, No. 54, in page 18, line 8, leave out 'the relevant' and insert 'any'.

No. 55, in page 18, line 9, after 'authority', insert 'which in the opinion of the Pilotage Commission have been used, have accrued or, as the case may be, have been incurred exclusively in connection with its pilotage functions'.

No. 56, in page 18, line 13, leave out from 'vesting' to 'in' in line 14.

No. 57, in page 18, line 16, leave out from 'itself' to end of line 18 and insert

'of any property rights and liabilities of the pilotage authority which, in the opinion of the Commission, have been used, have accrued or, as the case may be, have been incurred exclusively in connection with the authority's pilotage functions;

(b) make may similar provisions as to any such property rights and liabilities which, in the opinion of the Commission have been used, have accrued or, as the case may be, have been incurred substantially but not exclusively in connection with those functions; and'.

No. 58, in page 18, line 22, leave out 'relates to service' and insert

'calculated by reference to remuneration paid and service given'.

No. 59, in page 18, line 23, at end insert 'or guaranteed'.

No. 60, in page 18, line 23, at end insert—

'( ) Proposals submitted under subsection (2) above may include such supplementary and incidental provision in connection with the matters there mentioned as the Pilotage Commission considers appropriate.'.

No. 61, in page 18, line 28, leave out 'abolished' and insert 'pilotage'.

No. 62, in page 18, line 37, leave out subsections (7) and (8).

No. 64, in page 18, line 45, at end insert—

'( ) Nothing in this section shall require a scheme to make provision for the vesting in a competent harbour authority of any property, rights or liabilities already vested in it in its capacity as a pilotage authority.

( ) The Pilotage Commission may require any pilotage authority to furnish it within such time and in such form as the Commission may specify with such information as it considers necessary for the purpose of formulating the proposals to be submitted by it under this section; and any member of the Commission or person appointed by it for the purpose may inspect any books, documents or other records in the possession of the authority relating to any matter in respect of which information is required to be furnished under this subsection.'.—*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Clause 24, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 25

TRANSFER OF STAFF OF PILOTAGE AUTHORITIES ETC.

Amendment proposed, No. 66, in page 19, line 37, at beginning insert '*(a)*'.—*(Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Mr. Wallace: The amendments to clause 25 relate to the transfer of the pilot authorities and make provision for the winding-up of the old pilotage authorities. Clause 25(3) states:

"Such a scheme may make provision for the payment of compensation to staff of pilotage authorities"

who find themselves out of work or lose their employment as a result of this legislation.

Fairly generous provision is made for pilots by way of compensation and pensions for those who find themselves out of work. The position is that there "may" be compensation for the staff of the pilotage authorities. There is not the same compulsion in the winding-up of those authorities to provide those who lose their jobs with suitable compensation, especially those people who are over 50. I want to know whether it is the Government's intention that a more proper provision should be made for the staff of pilotage authorities who find themselves affected.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Certainly the Pilotage Commission will be able to make schemes that involve the employees as well as the assets.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 67, in page 19, line 41, leave out from beginning to 'all' in line 42 and insert

'; and

(b) without prejudice to paragraph *(a)* above—

(i)'.

No. 68, in page 19, line 45, leave out '*(b)*' and insert '(ii)'.

No. 69, in page 19, line 49, leave out 'Subsections (4) and (5) above are' and insert 'Subsection (4) above is'.

No. 70, in page 20, line 32, leave out '(5)' and insert '(4)*(b)*'.

No. 71, in page 20, line 35, leave out '(5)' and insert '(4)*(b)*'.—*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Clause 25, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 26 and 27 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 28

PILOTS' COMPENSATION SCHEMES

Amendments made, No. 72, in page 21, line 40, after second 'to', insert

'or for the benefit of'.

No. 73, in page 21, line 44, at end insert

'but were not then employed under a contract of employment by the pilotage authority for that district or any committee appointed by the authority under section 9(1)*(e)* of the Pilotage Act 1983'.

No. 74, in page 21, line 45, leave out 'made with' and insert 'offered to'.

No. 77, in page 22, line 13, leave out 'made with' and insert 'offered to'.—*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Clause 28, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 29 to 33 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1

TRANSITIONAL AND SAVING PROVISIONS

Amendments made, No. 78, in page 26, line 8, at end insert

'and any order made under section 1(3) or (4) of this Act by virtue of the said section 13'.

No. 79, in page 26, line 9, at end insert

'and the area which shall be taken to be its harbour shall be determined accordingly'.

No. 80, in page 26, line 22, after '(4)', insert '(4A)'.

No. 81, in page 26, line 22, leave out 'that section' and insert

'section 5 of this Act'.—*[Mr. Michael Spicer.]*

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 2 and 3 agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Prince of Wales's Consent signified]

10.59 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

There has been a weighty debate on the Bill, especially in the other place, with 22½ hours of debate. The Bill has been amended considerably, the temporary arbitration provision being one that strikes me at the moment. I think all those who have played a tremendous part, including my hon. Friends the Members for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and for Harwich (Sir. J. Ridsdale), in improving the legislation and making this a good and balanced Bill.

11 pm

Mr. Stott: The Minister said that the Bill had had a great deal of scrutiny. It certainly did in the other place, but I am not sure whether it has had adequate scrutiny in this House. On my hon. Friends' behalf, I have to register our disappointment that we were not able to consider the Bill in greater detail upstairs in Committee; instead, it has been debated on the Floor of the House on the day before the Easter recess. I am not sure that we have fashioned a better Bill out of Committee, but, in principle, this measure is worth supporting, and I certainly do not wish to impede its progress any further. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Mr. Godman) for his sterling support throughout the debates.

11.1 pm

Mr. Thornton: I join the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) in saying that the Bill has had a fair run this evening.

[Mr. Thornton]

but the debates have shown the need for great scrutiny of its detailed and complicated provisions. I share the hon. Gentleman's view that the Bill would have been better had we been able to consider it in greater detail upstairs in Committee, but it is a better Bill than when it started its passage through the other place. The debate has been important because I have been able to put on record some of my misgivings about the Bill's possible consequences.

The changes, as far as they have gone, have been welcome. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and his colleagues for their co-operation with me in getting the amendments accepted, and to my pilotage colleagues. It is not all gloom. It is a very much better Bill than when it started its passage. That is due in no small measure to that co-operation and to my hon. Friend's willingness to listen to our points.

However, my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will need to watch the legislation carefully. We have heard a great deal from Ministers about assurances—about the fair and equitable treatment of pilots and about safety around our coasts—but the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. We must ensure that the intention of the legislation is carried through. For the first time in pilotage legislation, Parliament has handed over the responsibility for pilotage almost totally to other people. We shall not have future opportunities to consider some of the most important matters that affect our coastal waters.

As I said on Second Reading, the Bill has had qualified support from pilots. Pilotage reorganisation was long overdue, and that was recognised. We believe that this reorganisation is rather like the curate's egg—good in parts. I say unequivocally that pilots will try to make the legislation work, but in no sense will any of the commitment that they have shown in the past be diminished by this legislation. They will continue to offer the quality of service and dedication to the shipping industry that have been the hallmarks of pilotage for as long as I have had anything to do with it, and certainly for many hundreds of years before that. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister. I just hope that many of his assurances will come to pass.

11.4 pm

Mr. Wallace: I echo what has been said about the speed with which the Bill has been disposed of in this House. Many of us would have liked to give it greater scrutiny. Many of the debates underlined the technical and detailed nature of the Bill. When we were able to go into detail, it was clear how much better it would have been if we could have had more time for scrutiny, perhaps not least of the early retirement and compensation provisions which did not even get a cursory examination.

The Minister has given the House many assurances and has expressed expectations that the pilots affected by the Bill will be treated fairly and equitably. We hope that those assurances will be well founded in the light of experience and that the Minister's hopes come to pass. What we have achieved in the Bill is an overdue but worthwhile rationalisation of the pilotage service. It is the hope of everyone that the provisions of the Bill work out successfully.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Opencast Mining (Newcastle-under-Lyme)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

11.5 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): Profit before people—that is what the Government believe in and that is what the Secretary of State believes in when he approves the British Coal planning application for the High Lane opencast site in my constituency. I was brought up in south Wales and saw the devastation to the environment, the total disregard for the living conditions of the workers and the greed for profit of the coal and iron masters. I learnt to despise the Tories for their arrogance and avarice. I watched the workers struggle, through the Labour and trade union movement, to better living and working conditions and to gain for themselves rights to have a say.

What has happened to those rights? They have become the farce of planning inquiries, where people who have forgotten the struggle of the workers for better living conditions have become the lackeys of the Tory Government in their bid for self-importance. They have become people who think that dirt, dust, noise and a view of industrial coal heaps are good enough for working people, and that opencast mining of 585 acres in the heart of my constituency is "in the public interest".

Whose public interest? It is not in the public interest of the people of the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme. It is not in the interest of 13,000 people who live within about half a mile of the opencast site. It is not in the interest of several hundred homes within a few hundred feet of the site. It is not in the interest of the people of Knutton, of Chesterton, of Silverdale, of Alsagers Bank, of High Lane and of Scot Hay, whose homes encircle the site. Nor is it in the interest of children, yet unborn, on Parksite estate whose fathers work in Silverdale pit, and who will grow up knowing only a view of a massive industrial void from their living room windows.

That void was described by the inspector as

"a significant landscape feature which would endure for a long time".

It will be significant with a surface area of 44 acres and a depth of 65 yards at its deepest point. Twenty years is a long time to have taken from one a pleasant view of green fields and hedges and to know only industrial waste.

These roads and villages already suffer from heavy lorries, noise, dust and industrial workings, of which my constituency has more than its fair share. Silverdale deep mine and Holditch deep mine, which has a dirt mound, both give noise and dust problems. There are two private licensed mines. There is marl extraction at Cemetery road, at Knutton lane and at Bradwell wood. The Bates wood opencast site covers 370 acres. The Red street opencast site of 132 acres dominates the miners' estate at Chesterton, with workings right up to the garden fences of many houses. That is an estate already suffering from the resultant problem of the sale of houses by British Coal, with structural problems and with landlord problems, and it is further devastated by the discovery that some of the houses have been built on red ash.

The Government encouraged people to buy their own homes. Even the inspector recognised that the people would have some difficulty and suffer financially if they wished to sell their homes. It is hard luck if people try to do what the Government say—get on their bikes to find a job. Who would buy a house when they read in the inspector's report:

"Top soil stripping and construction of baffle mounds, will be exempt from noise limitations, and would entail a considerable noise nuisance and represent an undesirable erosion of the quality of the residential environment."?

Who would buy a house in Black Bank road or the Cheviot close area? They will be only 33 ft and 25 ft away from 200,000 cu m of overburdened mound reaching to a height of 98 ft.

However, help is at hand. The inquiry proposed a baffle mound at the Cheviot close area to help with the noise problem. Even so, the inquiry accepts that it will not be of much help. In any case, it will involve a visual intrusion problem. If that is not enough, there will be a dust problem. The prevailing westerly winds will most seriously affect the Cheviot close area. In case the Minister thinks that that is just a row of houses, I should say that it is not. It is a large estate of houses which knits in closely with the village of Knutton which is an area of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The other area most seriously affected will be Loomer road, east of the over-burdened mounds. That is on the road on which the site traffic will be travelling. It has about 800 houses along its length.

There was no dispute at the inquiry that the dust could be controlled because of the elevation of the site and the prevailing winds. There was no dispute that noise levels would increase substantially or that blasting would be found unpleasant. However, let us not forget the lorries. The site access at Loomer road will have an estimated extra 98 vehicles a day — 196 movements — for eight years. The people of Loomer road already have an industrial estate along one side of the road. There will be coal haulage lorries at the rate of 120 lorries a day—240 movements a day—with access on to the A34, the main road through Newcastle-under-Lyme. Thank goodness we have half-day working on a Saturday.

What about the loss of amenities? It was agreed at the inquiry that only 54 acres of the main site could be considered as derelict and in need of treatment. As for the rest of the area, part of the conservation area of woodland at Watermills wood would be lost. The Great Row nature reserve would suffer from the proximity of the intensive operational area. All but seven hectares of the natural revegetated or "wild" areas would be lost and the wildlife driven out. There is a rich and varied animal life. There are 20 species of butterfly, nine species of dragonfly, and a variety of birds, including the relatively rare stonechat and grasshopper warbler. There are mammals, including badgers, and bats, as well as adders and lizards. They will all be driven out in this opencast madness. Twenty seven rights of way will be lost, as will 47 acres of public open space, 68 acres of woodland and miles of hedgerow. The amenity pool at Knutton will be lost and thousands of children living in the area will lose the use of the land for recreation.

In reply to my question in the House on 1 April, the Minister, with his supposed care for the countryside, said that it was a case of

"NIMBY—not in my back yard."—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1987; Vol. 113, c. 1094.]

I challenge the Minister to accept such devastation in his back yard or even in his front garden as it will be for

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

many of my constituents. All of that for 100 jobs in eight years, and many of those not new jobs. Would his constituents, or he, say that the cost of such devastation was too high a price to pay?

I shall deal with the need for opencast coal. A lot of nonsense has been talked about this opencast site being needed to mix in order to lower the chlorine content of the coal for the power stations. The inspector accepted that there were various other options to meet the demand of the Central Electricity Generating Board for low chlorine coal. Those options were not seriously disputed by British Coal. Indeed, given that the average chlorine content for deep mined coal in the United Kingdom is 0·28 per cent., and that suitable deep mined coal is being mined in nearby Warwickshire, there are other options.

In addition, national stocks of coal at pitheads have risen to 12 million tonnes in the last 12 months. Failure to use those stockpiles could result in further colliery closures, which is what this Government are truly aiming at.

Even the inspector, in granting permission, said:

"The argument on need has in my opinion been overstated."

He considered that it was perhaps based on the Government's policy for the cheaper open cast coal, but he was at a loss to know whether the policy implied an expansion, nationally or locally, of the historic levels of opencast production. The inspector drew the conclusion that there was an abandonment of a national target and a reliance on market forces. A typical Tory policy: greed, not need.

Despite the devastation that this opencast mining would cause, the Secretary of State agreed on 31 March that it should go ahead. That should be contrasted with the Minister's words on 23 February on the Streets Lane site also in Staffordshire, when he reduced the size of that site from 520 acres to 395 acres. He said:

"The Secretary of State takes the view that the case presents the need to strike a difficult balance between the need for the coal, and protection of the local community and its amenities."

In reducing the size of the site, he considered

"that this would distance the dwellings in Upper Norwood village, and at the end of Cheslyn Hay from the noise and dust associated with this development — as it would from the 'smallholding', and it would obviate the need for Upper Ladywood lane to be diverted. It would also lessen the nuisance associated with the construction of over-burden mounds. In these particular circumstances, the Secretary of State regards these advantages as compelling and as outweighing the loss of coal necessitated by the reduced area of extraction."

What a contrast that presents to the Secretary of State's views on the Highlane opencast site, with its over-burden mound standing 98 ft high and covering 74 acres, with the 16 ft high boundary baffle mounds, with its destruction of a hamlet of eight houses, and its diverting of Black Bank road. What happened to his concern for the environment and for the people between 23 February and 31 March? The answer is: nothing happened. The only difference is that Newcastle-under-Lyme has a Labour Member of Parliament, and the Streets Lane site has a Tory Member of Parliament.

The Government have no real concern for people; they do not listen to what they have to say; and they have no real concern for the environment. This was a matter of buying votes. When it is a case of buying Tory votes then it is different.

In the case of the loyal and ancient borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme with its 800-year-old charter, this Government put profit before people. As the Secretary of State is too ashamed to appear himself, can the Minister tell me—can the Minister tell the House—when the rape of my constituency by this Tory Government will cease?

11.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) made a powerful but rather prickly speech, but I congratulate her on the speed with which she has managed to raise this matter in the House. The decision on the High lane site was issued on 31 March, and, as the hon. Lady said, she raised the matter with my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Planning at Question Time on 1 April, and now we are having an Adjournment debate upon it—all in the space of 10 days.

I am sure that the House will appreciate that I am unable to comment on the merits of a particular planning decision. Once a decision has been given on an appeal or called-in application, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no further jurisdiction in the matter, and he cannot reopen it to consider any further representations or complaints that he may receive. Any person who is aggrieved by a decision on appeal and wishes to question the validity of the decision may make an application to the High Court within six weeks from the date of the decision. The decision on the High lane site was made only 10 days ago, so it would be doubly inappropriate for me to make any comment on the merits.

However, as we have heard, the hon. Lady is concerned primarily with opencast coal sites in her constituency and the effect that they have. I hope that in the time that is available to me I can offer some general reassurance.

There are two British Coal opencast sites currently in operation in the hon. Lady's constituency. Both of them were authorised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy under the Opencast Coal Act 1958. Red street was authorised in July 1981 and Bateswood North in June 1982. Both sites are nearing the end of their productive life. I understand that Red street is expected to finish coaling soon and that Bateswood North is expected to finish in about 1990. Once operations are completed, the land will be restored by British Coal under the terms of its authorisations.

I can appreciate, however, the hon. Lady's concern. I think that we all accept that opencast coal mining is an intrusive operation. It can cause considerable environmental damage while it is being carried out and consequently it arouses a good deal of local controversy. But opencasting produces a cheap and profitable good quality fuel, which is important to the nation's economy and the financial viability of the British Coal Corporation. It is crucial, therefore, that we should seek to strike the right balance between the nation's interest in exploiting this mineral resource and that of protecting our environment.

It may help to demonstrate how we are seeking to achieve this if I explain the policy background against which individual decisions are taken on their merits. As I have said, prior to 1 April 1984, British Coal did not apply

for planning permission for proposals to work coal by opencast methods. Instead it applied to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy for authorisation under section 1 of the Opencast Coal Act 1958. When granting authorisation, my right hon. Friend also gave deemed planning permission for the development under section 2 of the 1958 Act.

The Commission on Energy and the Environment in its report entitled "Coal and the Environment" in May 1983 recognised that consideration of opencast proposals should properly rest with mineral planning authorities in the same way as any other development proposals. The Government accepted this in their White Paper of the same name. We therefore introduced transitional arrangements on 1 March 1984 by the Department of the Environment circular 3/84, under which, instead of applying to the Secretary of State for Energy for authorisation, British Coal applies for planning permission to the appropriate mineral planning authority.

However, while the relevant provisions of the 1958 Act remain on the statute book, British Coal still requires authorisation from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, to whom responsibility for giving authorisation was administratively transferred. This now superfluous administrative operation will be removed on the commencement of part V of the Housing and Planning Act 1986. British Coal's opencast operations will then be brought fully within the ambit of the land use planning system.

The Commission on Energy and the Environment also recommended that the level of opencast production should be allowed to decline as new and more profitable deep mines were brought on stream, and recommended the adoption of a series of guidelines that would confine opencast extraction to sites where coal would otherwise be sterilised by built development; where the site could be environmentally improved by coaling and subsequent restoration, or where other environmental benefits could be obtained; where there was a demonstrable need for a certain grade of coal for blending, or specialised needs that could not be met by deep mines; or to supply demonstrable short-term increases on demand which deep mine production was too inflexible to satisfy.

However, the commission recognised the need to take account of the overall economic benefit to the nation of opencast production. DOE circular 3/84 therefore advised that each project should be considered in terms of the market requirement for its planned output—taking into account the alternative sources of supply, including deep-mine coal—as well as the environmental, agricultural and other planning considerations. It suggested that proposals should be examined against the following considerations, in no particular order of significance: first, the extent to which the coal would otherwise be sterilised by built development; secondly, the extent to which the site could be environmentally improved in the longer term by coal extraction and subsequent restoration; thirdly, the extent to which the proposal would facilitate the comprehensive working of the coal deposits of an area in an efficient and environmentally satisfactory manner; and, finally, the extent to which the extraction of coal from a site would facilitate the efficient and economic working of other mineral deposits on that site.

In practice, there has been considerable difficulty in interpreting what constitutes "market requirement" for an individual site in relation to an internationally traded commodity. That, in part, has led to disputes and delays in dealing with planning applications. We are therefore taking the opportunity that will arise on repeal of the redundant authorisation requirements in the Opencast Coal Act 1958 to revise and strengthen the guidelines for opencast coal operations. Yesterday we issued a draft circular for public consultation, which seeks to set a balanced framework against which individual proposals can be examined.

The draft circular drops the reference to market requirement, and applicants will no longer have to provide a justification for the specific need for the coal. I must stress that it is not a free-for-all; indeed, under our proposals, the crucial test of an opencast coal application will be whether the mineral can be extracted in an environmentally acceptable way. It will be for the industry to decide the level of production that it wishes to aim for, but for mineral planning authorities to determine the acceptability of individual proposals.

The draft circular sets out the national policy considerations, both economic and environmental, that planning authorities will need to take account of when determining individual applications. Opencast coal can be produced cheaply and profitably, and can make a substantial contribution to British Coal's progress towards break-even and its subsequent progress towards self-financing and a satisfactory rate of return on capital. However, the draft emphasises that, whilst recognising the importance of opencast coal, the Government are firmly committed to the protection of the environment; and that environmental controls are therefore vital to the acceptability of opencast working, and must be adhered to if sites are to meet current environmental standards. As for all minerals, proposals for new opencast workings or extensions of existing workings affecting National Parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of special scientific interest and national nature reserves must be subject to the most rigorous examination.

The draft circular also gives specific advice on the handling of opencast coal proposals. The industry is encouraged to explain fully and as early as possible the nature of its proposals, indicating the ways in which it intends to deal with the environmental factors that will arise. Where large sites or sites that may be worked over many years are proposed, the industry is encouraged to discuss its proposals at an early stage with the local community, by arranging, for example, public meetings and exhibitions. The draft stresses the desirability of using environmental assessment techniques appropriate to the scale of the development and the sensitivity of the area. We also propose to retain the considerations set out in the existing circular.

We will also emphasise that a positive approach should be taken where opencasting would help clear dereliction or secure the early release of former colliery sites for reclamation. Particular emphasis too is given to the importance of proper restoration and after-care of sites to a subsequent beneficial use and the need for the principles of restoration to be clearly settled at the time planning permission is granted.

We believe that these proposals taken together strike the right balance between the needs of industry and the economy to develop these important mineral resources and the nation's interest in the protection of the environment. It must be right for industry to make its own

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

investment decisions appropriate to its financial objectives, and for mineral planning authorities to determine the acceptability of individual projects through the land use planning system.

It is a fact of life that minerals can only be worked where they are found, and opencast coal is no exception. The acceptability of opencast coal working will depend in part on the likely environmental impact of the proposals and on the steps to be taken by the developer to minimise those effects. The draft circular makes it clear that the visual intrusions of a site—the effects of dust, noise and vibration from blasting and heavy traffic movements—are all material considerations. These can be reduced by the careful planning of operations, including the siting of boundaries and baffle banks, limiting the height of overburden heaps and moving away from residential areas quickly.

There will be cases where the environmental effects taken together add up to such a severe diminution in the quality of life for a locality that the development should not proceed.

We hope that the draft guidelines published yesterday will provide mineral planning authorities with the right framework and advice to help them to solve the conflicting pressures which inevitably arise in considering particular development proposals.

I recognise that the hon. Lady will be disappointed that I am unable to discuss the merits of particular planning decisions, including the one affecting her constituency. Nevertheless, I hope that what I have said will help to explain the background against which these decisions are taken and our proposals for the way forward. I hope that she will feel reassured that environmental considerations figure large in my right hon. Friend's consideration of matters that come before him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 10 April 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Banks (Interest Rates)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Gerald Malone.]*

9.35 am

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise in this House the problems that arise for those who borrow money from banks when the banks are not required to inform them of the rates of interest that will be charged.

Today, there are millions of people with bank accounts. That number is growing, largely because of the repeal of the Truck Acts and the removal of the requirement that a manual worker can be paid other than in cash only with his or her written consent.

There were times when bank accounts were the preserve of the wealthy and the elite—those times have gone. There were times perhaps when bank borrowers did not need to be protected because they were on equal terms with those from whom they borrowed—likewise, those times have gone.

The sad legal position is that, although most other borrowers are protected because the Consumer Credit Act 1974 laid down requirements governing the form and content of regulated agreements which, in effect, required borrowers — whether from banks, building societies, moneylenders or anyone else who lends in the course of business — to be told how much interest is being charged, unfortunately an exception applies to current account overdrafts. I believe that that wide exception was wrongly introduced by the Director General of Fair Trading. How are the banks dealing with this problem? What can be done to put matters right, not least in a debate in which legislation cannot be recommended?

I start with the importance of this matter to ordinary folk. There is a wonderful story that I hope will appeal to the Minister about an occasion in the early 1970s when merchant banks were collapsing largely as a result of major loans to those who should not have received them. One bank that did not succumb was Lazard Freres and apparently Lord Cowdray asked Lord Poole, then chairman of that bank, how it was that he had avoided making those unsatisfactory loans. Lord Poole replied, "I only lend money to people who have been to Eton."

I am sure that that would appeal enormously to the Minister, who I believe had the good fortune to have such an education, but it is an education which I believe has been denied to almost all of my 63,000 constituents and their children. Therefore, they would not have obtained a loan from Lazard Freres. However, even if the Minister had received an overdraft, for which I am sure he would qualify, I doubt whether he would know how much interest he would be charged.

This morning I spoke to a most distinguished financial journalist. I asked him, "Do you have an overdraft?" He said, "Yes, I have always had an overdraft." I asked, "How much interest are you being charged on your overdraft?" He said, "I don't know. Somewhere I have a letter from the bank showing the percentage that I am being charged above base rate, but I don't know what it is." If that applies to a distinguished financial journalist, whom I shall not name unless under the greatest provocation from him, how much more does it apply to the ordinary bank borrower?

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that in your position you would not need an overdraft. I hope not. I cannot claim to be in the same position. I am sure that the Minister has many overdrafts. If he has, I venture to hope that with his distinguished schooling, which I have now laid bare for the House, he would know how to handle that overdraft, what he is being charged and that if he shopped around in the market place, he could probably knock down the interest rate to the lowest available to him. For a Minister educated at Eton, I think that it would be a very low rate of interest. If it were the Government, I should take a different view.

However, the ordinary bank borrower is not in that happy position. He is not used to handling complicated transactions. He does not know the questions to ask. If you, Mr. Speaker, do not know what questions to ask, you will not get the answers that one should and that the banks would be prepared to give.

I am reminded of the wonderful remark by a judge recently in court when somebody was talking about the average person. He said, "We should bear it in mind that about 50 per cent. of the population is below average intelligence." That was a monumental thought. The fact is that even if one is above average intelligence, which one would presume for anyone who obtains admittance to Eton, never mind getting out of it without having been expelled, that is likely to mean that one does not know what the banks will do and how one is likely to be ripped off if one does not know one's rights.

With ordinary authorised overdrafts, most people believe that there is a standard charge. Where there is not, most people believe that there is no point in asking for a lower rate, whereas if they asked, they would get it. Most people do not know that the banks are under no obligation to tell them what they are charging and that if they ask, they could get a reduction.

The matter gets worse when the banks produce what they choose to call unauthorised overdrafts. One can get an unauthorised overdraft by the simple process of overdrawing more than one should, probably inadvertently. Then the whole overdraft becomes unauthorised. Certainly, the part of the overdraft that is over the top would, but I suspect that it would be the lot. If one's overdraft comes to the end of its term and one does not renew it, and the bank writes and believes that one has not replied, the bank will treat the overdraft as unauthorised. At that stage, I regret to say that one can be charged almost anything that the bank manager wants to charge.

I have asked about that at various clearing banks and should like to inform the House of the replies that I have received. For example, Lloyds bank explained the situation as follows:

"Interest rates for borrowing without arrangement will vary depending on our Manager's knowledge of the customer and his assessment of the risk. Unarranged overdrafts are

[Mr. Greville Janner]

costly to us in administration and Managers have discretion to charge interest up to a maximum rate of 2 per cent. per month".

To most people of average intelligence, that would work out at 24 per cent. per annum, but it does not. The figure that I was given was APR 26·8 per cent. People may think that that means that in the month of April the charge is 26·8 per cent., but APR means something different.

I am pleased to say that a further journalist, a very intelligent man, whom I met this morning—but not a financial journalist—did not know what an APR was, and he had a degree. That makes it difficult for those who have neither an education at Eton nor a degree to understand, even when they are told what the position is. It gets worse. The banks tell me that they advertise. I salute the Royal Bank of Scotland for this. Apart from conveying to me the compliments of the season, the bank said that it was actively considering wider advertisement of the interest rates payable on unauthorised borrowing. In effect, as some banks do, the Royal Bank of Scotland will put on the bank's walls notices saying how the rates are charged, and it may do so in the national press.

I venture to suggest that those without adequate knowledge and perhaps even without a degree in economics, or those who are non-financial journalists, would not understand the advertisements either. If the advertisements start talking about standard rates and APR, that is beyond the ken of the ordinary average person whom I am seeking to protect—my constituents who are being ripped off by banks charging them exorbitant rates up to 26·8 per cent. per annum without telling them what the charge will be. In many cases people do not know that with the law in the ludicrous state that it is in, in the absence of agreements to the contrary, overdrafts are repayable on demand. The demand is often made in ways that ruin business.

The small business of a constituent of mine was ruined recently by precisely that method. I wrote to the banking ombudsman in the hope that he would be able to help. I received a courteous reply, enclosing a copy of his annual report for 1985-86, which contains a paragraph headed, "Disclosure of the cost of borrowing." It contains the words

"While not the subject of any large number of complaints in our first nine months".

I emphasise that people do not complain, because they do not know. One complains only if one realises that one has a right and if one believes that one is not getting it. People have no idea that they are being ripped off and that the banks are charging them higher rates than even moneylenders would be expected to charge.

The report continues:

"several correspondents have complained that insufficient information is offered by banks. This subject has been covered by the National Consumer Council, and in their report on 'Banking Services and the Consumer' they recommended that banks 'should give their customers better information about the costs of overdraft'."

Indeed. At a time when computers are used to tell us what we owe, surely those same computers should be brought into action to tell us what we are being charged on that which we owe.

The report states:

"The lack of information can cause confusion,"—

indeed it can—

"For example, one bank customer complained to the Ombudsman that his bank statement on his loan account made him an offer of personal loans at a 'new lower APR'."

Here we are again. The report continues:

"The bank intended to convey only that personal loans were on offer at a lower rate than previously applied to that type of loan. But the complainant naturally assumed it referred to his existing overdraft, and was justifiably annoyed to discover that the 'new lower APR' was actually higher than the rate he was paying!"

So on the one hand the bank was saying that it would provide a lower rate and at the same time it was charging the man at a higher rate.

The ombudsman goes on to say:

"We recognise the difficulties of informing customers of the APR on overdrafts when the amount outstanding and the interest rate, may vary from day to day, and when the date of repayment is undefined. Nevertheless, we suggest that banks should give some indication of the interest rate charged on an overdraft — even if only that it is at a certain percentage above base rate."

Thus, the first request that I make to the Minister is that he informs the banks that the Government are concerned, and recognise that ordinary people, and some extraordinary people, even financial journalists, cannot understand the implications of bank borrowing and the interest rate, and that the banks should now give an indication of the interest rate charged on an overdraft.

I took the matter up with the Government and received a courteous reply from the Department of Trade and Industry from the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Minister responsible for corporate and consumer affairs, who is now, I believe, re-arranging the banks in Japan. I drew his attention to matters occuring here and he replied that the exemption for banks and overdrafts from the unusual rules

"reflects the fact that overdrafts are in general . . . a flexible and informal facility which offers considerable benefits to bank customers, in particular the ability to overdraw without a prior arrangement."

The Minister stated later in his letter:

"it would not be obviously unreasonable for banks to provide information, retrospectively, on the rate of interest that has been charged in respect of an overdraft."

The Minister has agreed, by saying, with his usual hyperbole, "not obviously unreasonable", that banks should provide information. I believe that it would be entirely reasonable and right that the Government should lean on the banks, as only the Government can, to provide that information when that information could and should be given.

If the Government do not give the information to the banks that people are concerned, if the banks do not give information to their borrowers and if the present situation remains, in some future debate when it is within the rules of order, I shall seek to introduce legislation. Meanwhile, I refer yet again to the third port of call—that most distinguished Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Gordon Borrie, with whom I have had correspondence on this matter—who said in a letter that he

"would prefer that consumers make better use of the Quotations regulations"

although he is not proposing at the moment to remove the exemption for banks.

At the end of his letter, Sir Gordon Borrie states:

"This is an area that my Office will continue to monitor, particularly since building societies are now able to provide current account overdrafts and to benefit from the Determination."

In other words, the determination that there should be an exemption for overdrafts obtainable from banks, has now

been extended to other lenders to whom it was not originally intended to apply — in other words, to building societies. As the number of moneylenders—by whatever name—grows, so the exemption extends its scope and as it extends, so the Government should move in to narrow that scope.

The law in the Consumer Credit Act 1974 gives the Director General of Fair Trading the power that he has exercised. He has exercised it in the belief that in so doing he would be helping the consumer to obtain overdrafts under a system that he believed should be flexible. The system is not working properly. It is not protecting individuals.

There used to be a saying: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be." Few of my constituents are not borrowers. Anyone who owns his own house, borrows. People with mortgages and bank overdrafts are borrowers. People who use credit cards and those who borrow privately, as many are forced to when they are short of money, are borrowers and affected by that area of law. People are therefore outside that worthy old proverb. It cannot be avoided. Therefore, in the old days the Government were free to stand by and allow people to deal with each other, business man to business man, Lord Poole to Eton graduates. Today, ordinary people require protection from the law.

When the overdraft comes to an end and the time for the advance comes to be repaid, banks should do far more than at present to inform people. It is not enough, for example, for a bank to write a letter to a customer saying, "Your limit was agreed for the year ending on such a date; do you wish it to be renewed?" If the bank receives no reply, it should not treat the matter as an unauthorised overdraft and charge up to 26·8 per cent. interest without even informing the customer that the rate is to shoot up in that totally unconscionable way.

Nor is it enough, in my view, for ordinary people to be protected by the law as it stands without Government intervention to warn them about the end of overdrafts. People do not generally realise the power that lies in the hands of the bank manager where an overdraft, in the absense of agreement to the contrary, is repayable on demand. Happily, most bank managers exercise their great power with discretion most of the time. However, there are exceptions, and when the exception arises, the law protects the bank, not the individual. The Government protect the bank and not the individual.

Before the Minister leaves for his well-earned Easter recess, I want him to look at this problem with some care from the point of view of ordinary borrowers who do not understand the law, who do not know what banks can do to them or what interest they are being charged. I want him to consider the problem with regard to those who do not know that they can shop around for lower interest rates and get them and who do not understand that, even if there is an advertisement advertising a standard rate, that will not protect them.

Those people will not know their rights. It is the Government's duty to inform them of their rights. It is also the Government's duty to require the banks to behave decently, honourably and well towards the ordinary borrower. If that does not work, it will be the duty of the House to ensure that the Director General of Fair Trading removes the exemption for banks. If he does not do that, the law should be changed.

9.56 am

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I must admit that I have some sympathy with the case that has been argued by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), in spite of the intermittent undertones of the class war with which he laced his discourse. Even Etonians suffer from time to time from the bad manners, incompetence and arrogance of banks. Perhaps Lord Poole's restriction was unduly restrictive. I would have preferred to stand it on its head; had I been in his position, I would have lent freely other than to those who had been to Harrow.

We must all remember that, although there may be an element of, as the hon. and learned Gentleman termed it, "rip-off" — I would not echo that — or financial inconvenience attached to those who make feckless use of intermittent overdraft facilities that are not clearly or closely agreed, the alternative might be that the cheque was returned without being met. People would have to ask themselves whether they would welcome a position in which banks returned cheques more often and caused the embarrasment and dislocation that might arise as a result.

In general, I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman. It is desirable that all those who borrow money should be fully aware of the cost of any credit that is made available. That is one of the main purposes of the Consumer Credit Act 1974. It requires, among several other things, that the annual percentage rate of charge — the APR — should be given in most credit arrangements and advertisements. That is intended to ensure that not only is the customer aware of the cost of the credit agreement, but that he has a means of comparison between one source of credit and another. That is the shopping around which the hon. and learned Gentleman said was desirable. I agree with him.

The hon. and learned Gentleman said that those provisions of the Consumer Credit Act do not apply to bank overdrafts. Overdrafts are not totally exempt from the Act, but section 74 provides that agreements which permit a consumer to overdraw on a bank account may be exempt from Part V of the Act, where the Director General of Fair Trading so determines. The exemption means that the lender need not comply with most of the documentation requirements of the Act, although other important provisions of the Act, such as the right to early termination, rebate and protection against extortionate credit, are still available to the borrower. Of course, advertisements by banks will have to quote the APR.

Section 74 provides that the Director General may exempt such agreements subject to such conditions as he sees fit to impose, but only if he believes that it would not be against the interest of debtors for him to do so. It is perhaps worth pointing out that the original exemption in the Act was slightly narrower than at present, in that exemption would not have applied when any term of the agreement was expressed in writing. It was the Labour Government in the Banking Act 1979 who broadened the scope of the exemption by repealing this requirement, in recognition of the need to provide lenders with a clear and unambiguous exemption.

In November 1983, the Director General issued a determination which exempted bank overdrafts from part V. The view taken by Parliament in providing for this exemption and, no doubt, the view taken by the Director General in granting such an exemption was that, far from

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harming consumers, it would be to their advantage. That is because a bank overdraft is a flexible and informal facility which offers considerable benefits to the customer, especially the ability to overdraw without prior arrangement with the bank. The House will be aware that, typically, a personal overdraft represents an anticipation of salary by a customer and lasts—or so he hopes—for only a very short time, often no more than a day or two.

That has not applied to any of my overdrafts; perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman shares that experience, but ideally, the overdraft lasts for no more than a day or two until the next pay cheque is received. Of course, sometimes the customer, unless he keeps a very close track of his affairs—I suspect that this applies to most hon. Members—may be unaware that an overdraft has been created until he receives his next bank statement. Indeed, someone who shares my apprehension at my bank statement, and flinches to such an extent that he does not open it, may be unaware of the overdraft until much later.

Mr. Janner: The Minister should give it to his wife.

Mr. Clark: That is exactly the solution that I adopted some years ago, but it is sometimes easier to resist the reproaches of one's bank manager than the wrath of one's spouse.

Notwithstanding the arguments of the hon. and learned Gentleman, I believe that it would be wrong to remove the exemption and thus require banks to document all overdrafts in line with the provisions of the Consumer Credit Act. To start with, it would impose extra costs on the banks, for which the customer would no doubt pay, in the end, through higher charges. More importantly, it could seriously inhibit the present flexible arrangements which offer considerable benefits to bank customers.

That is the convenience which many people, sometimes unwittingly, enjoy when they issue a cheque, not knowing precisely how much money is in the account, but confident —or, at any rate, optimistic—that the bank will meet it. If those flexible arrangements suffered from administrative intrusion, there would be a danger that they would contract.

The hon. and learned Gentleman said that all his constituents were borrowers——

Mr. Janner: No.

Mr. Clark: In that case, I apologise to the good burghers of Leicester.

Mr. Janner: The majority of them.

Mr. Clark: The majority of his constituents are borrowers. I do not know whether they would thank him if, being random, casual borrowers, they discovered that, due to his powerful advocacy, arrangements were put in place which greatly restricted the facility with which they could borrow. If a bank had to comply with all the requirements of the Consumer Credit Act every time an overdraft was entered into, it would involve the drawing up of a written agreement that would have to be sent to the customer for signature and returned to the bank.

As all of us would agree, the issuing of a cheque is often spontaneous. It must then go through a process which, regrettably, seems to take a short time, and if this procedure was followed, there would be a somewhat accelerated process in which the bank would have to contact the customer and quickly draw him into a written agreement before it met the cheque. The only alternative might be not to meet the chewue, which would create embarrassment and inconvenience to the customer and to the person to whom he had issued the cheque, who could be another constituent of the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Given the way in which the existing arrangements operate, such a procedure would not be practicable, since a customer may often be unaware that a transaction gives rise to an overdraft, and there is no contact between a bank and the customer, or it is difficult to make contact, which would cause delays. The result would be that banks might decide to cease to make overdraft facilities so widely available. In some circumstances, they might decide to refuse to honour cheques. I am sure that the majority of bank customers would not want that.

None the less, I do not suggest that the present provisions should be regarded as set in concrete. My Department has been reviewing the working of the Consumer Credit Act, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for corporate and consumer affairs will wish to consider whether section 74 is working as intended, taking into account the views expressed by the hon. and learned Gentleman, similar comments that were made by hon. Members during the passage of the Banking Bill and the views of the banking ombudsman in his first annual report.

My Department already has it in mind to make one change to the treatment of overdrafts under the Consumer Credit Act. It will affect the treatment not of the inadvertent overdraft, but of those overdrafts which are agreed in advance between a bank and a customer. In that case, the overdraft is more akin to a bank loan, which would be fully regulated by the Act. We agree that it is reasonable that customers who enter into such agreements should be fully informed of the main terms of the agreement, including the cost of credit. That is why we are prepared to agree to provisions in the consumer credit directive, which was formally adopted on 22 December last year, which will require information in respect of such agreements, including the cost of credit, to be notified in writing to consumers. It is likely that the requirements will be effected by a variation in the terms of the Director General's determination; my Department and the Office of Fair Trading are currently considering that. *[Interruption.]*

I am glad to hear the hon. and learned Gentleman indicate his assent, as I consider this a sensible move. He says that it is a start. Whether it will be possible to go all the way in the direction for which he argues — and whether that would even be desirable—I cannot say at this stage. However, to do as much as we propose will bring the arrangements into line with the aims of the Consumer Credit Act.

I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will find that helpful. However, for the reasons that I have given at length, I cannot consider amending section 74 of the Act to remove the present exemption, or indeed asking the Director General of Fair Trading significantly to alter the scope of the exemption available under his determination. There are strong arguments, which I have outlined, in support of the present arrangements; nor is my Department aware of serious consumer disadvantages in relation to overdrafts.

The hon. and learned Gentleman cited a number of cases, but he was not particularly specific. As I do not have

the advantage of having engaged in correspondence with him or of having seen copies of his correspondence with my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I do not know the extent to which he has illustrated his arguments with particular cases of hardship or—as he seemed to imply—the exploitation of those who unwittingly become involved in over-extended commitments. The more of such material that can be produced, the more momentum there will be behind the arguments.

I accept that it might not be unreasonable for banks to provide retrospectively some information on the rate of interest applying to an overdraft. I understand that, at present, information on the rate of interest charged by a bank is displayed in its branches, and that it is also made available to individual customers on request. It is possible that, following the report of the banking ombudsman, the banks will see fit to go further, and perhaps to provide information on the rate of interest applying to an overdraft in regular statements.

I should regard that as a very welcome development, and I shall ask my officials to discuss the possibility with the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers. Certainly some foreign banks operate the practice. I do not know whether any of the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents have bank accounts in Switzerland, but it is possible that some of his clients do. If so, they will know that Swiss banks display on a daily basis the level of interest charged and the amount involved. The hon. and learned Gentleman can draw from that whatever inference he chooses.

The scope of the exemption granted by the Director General of Fair Trading under section 74 of the Act is very much a matter for him to decide. I know that he has been approached by the hon. and learned Gentleman, and that he is considering, together with the office of the banking ombudsman, whether there is a case for revising the determination that he granted in 1983. It is open to the Director General to vary the terms of his determination, perhaps to require certain minimum information to be provided to customers, and my Department will be keeping in close touch with his office. We share the objective of ensuring that the provisions of the Act operate in a way that is ultimately beneficial to consumers, while also recognising the risk that detailed regulation may be counter-productive.

Mr. Janner: Let me first thank the Minister for his statement, and for the two positive steps that it takes in the direction that I have recommended. Meanwhile, will he be good enough to tell the banks that the Government will keep a keen and beady eye on the advertising of interest rates and the way in which it is done, to ensure that the meaning of such advertising is clear?

Mr. Clark: No doubt the banks will read the *Official Report* carefully and draw the conclusions that they consider appropriate.

Highway Code

10.15 am

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I am glad to have the opportunity to raise with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport a matter which is fairly simple on the surface, and which I hope will be susceptible of a simple solution.

No doubt, Mr. Speaker, you are fully familiar with the highway code. You will, therefore, know that if you read it carefully you will find a reference to the need for motor insurance—although it is the only reference that I have been able to detect. It appears on page 66, in fairly small print, and forms part of the advice to drivers of motor vehicles that, before driving, they should ensure that

"your use of the vehicle is properly insured and that there are no restrictions in the relevant insurance policy . . . which would make your use of the vehicle illegal".

I want to ask my hon. Friend whether "properly insured" in this context really means what it says. His defence will rightly be that "properly" in such a context means that the legal requirements are satisfied. Most of us know that, provided that a driver has a third party policy, generally speaking he can drive legally on the open road. He will not be covered as fully as he might be if he had a comprehensive policy, but those policies are rather more expensive to take out, because they provide much wider cover. The difference between third party and comprehensive policies is well known, and motorists of all ages are probably well equipped to make the appropriate choice according to their needs and means. However, I doubt whether many motorists realise that comprehensive insurance is not quite what it says.

Many of us are now aware of a scheme run by the Motor Insurers Bureau whereby, in the event of an accident causing injury which results from the action of a driver who is negligent but who is not insured, an additional element of cover is provided over and above what the motorist may have taken out for himself. However, the position on which I want to focus my remarks is that in which the driver is insured but is not negligent. That was brought to my attention recently by a constituency case; I followed it up, and it has led on to others.

Let me briefly give some details of that first case. On 4 March last year, a constituent of mine, Miss Samantha Tremayne, had her R registration Cavalier written off in an accident. She was not in the car at the time; it was parked outside her home in Station road, West Byfleet, when another driver—also a constituent of mine—drove her car into it after suffering a sudden stroke. She was taken to hospital, where she had another more serious stroke, and later, most unfortunately, died.

The driver's insurance company refused to accept liability for the accident, on the ground that no negligence had been involved and that there had been no reason to suspect that the unfortunate lady might suffer a stroke. The case went slightly further: the driver's executors were advised that to meet a claim for Miss Tremayne against the estate might prejudice their own claim against the insurance company. My constituent, who was covered only by third party insurance, was thus left facing a loss of about £600. Her solicitors were quite unable to persuade the other insurance company to meet the loss. Miss Tremayne summarised it to me in a letter in which she said:

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"I have been told by a solicitor that I have no legal claim to the Insurance Company, because in their eyes, it is classed as an 'act of God.'"

I heard about the case in October 1986 and contacted Lloyd's about it, but without any success. I was told that if Miss Tremayne had taken out comprehensive cover, she could have had her claim met, probably by her own insurance company under an indemnity. A letter to me from Mr. Presland, a Lloyd's consumer inquiries officer, contains this sentence:

"Regrettably Miss Tremayne chose to take only restricted insurance cover in her own right and to rely upon her common law rights of recovery for recompense in respect of damage sustained to her vehicle as a result of the negligence of another. Had she taken out Comprehensive cover, she could of course have sought recompense from the insurer on an indemnity basis."

The consumer inquiries officer said that the case did not involve Lloyd's, and that Lloyd's did not think that the insurance company had acted unreasonably or unfairly in refusing to meet the claim.

The point about having a comprehensive policy is relevant. It is also relevant that such a policy would have cost this young lady, a 19-year-old office worker, about £300 a year. She felt, understandably, that that was more than she could possibly afford. In the end, she was lucky. The executors of the other driver agreed to make an ex-gratia payment from the deceased's estate, but Miss Tremayne still felt that her experience revealed a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. I was glad to take it up on her behalf with Ministers.

In their replies to my letters, both the Lord Chancellor and my hon. Friend the Minister expressed their sympathy, but they said that there was nothing that they felt could or should be done. In particular, they both resisted any suggestion that the law of liability should be amended to provide a no-fault scheme for compensation in cases of personal injury or property damage.

I should be out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I sought to pursue the need for legislation for such a scheme. I realise that there are good reasons why it may not be so desirable as it appears to be on the surface, but it is right that I should try to press the matter further, if only to alert more people to the kind of risks that they may run.

My constituent also says:

"How can it be fair to a person, for their car to be parked outside their own house and written off, to then find there is no legal claim—surely this cannot be right."

Miss Tremayne is not alone in feeling that way. Having taken certain steps to interest the local press in the case, I received a letter from a gentleman who lives not far away in Weybridge, who told me of an incident that he described as follows:

"My son's car was damaged while parked, when an unfortunate man died at the wheel of his car, crashing through my front fence and coming to rest in my garden. Due to the bad publicity in a Sunday newspaper the Insurance Co. eventually paid up, although previous to this a solicitor could not help."

That is another way of dealing with the problem. I was glad to learn that that case had ended so well, although I was interested to hear that it had happened in 1973. As my hon. Friend the Minister must therefore be aware, this is a long-standing problem.

Closer to home—indeed, only last week after I had asked for the opportunity to raise this matter on the Adjournment—I was extremely interested to receive a letter from an engineering company in my constituency telling me of a very similar case that it had recently experienced. The managing director of the company has been kind enough to send me copies of two letters on the subject. The first is a letter from the insurance company to the solicitors. It says:

"we have now received our Engineer's report following the inspection of your vehicle and note that it has unfortunately been rendered beyond economic repair. Our Engineer has placed a pre-accident value of £325 and £335, with a salvage that should realise between £25 and £30. However, the accident circumstances were that our Insured suffered a blackout and thus collided into the rear of your vehicle. We have since been advised that our Insured driver . . . has undergone a series of tests and was found to be suffering from a brain tumour, and is undergoing surgery. The circumstances are such that our Insured was unaware of his illness prior to the accident, and therefore you will appreciate that we are unable to accept responsibility, in view of the fact that our Insured has not acted negligently."

That letter prompted a fairly pointed response from the engineering company, which the managing director has copied to me. It says:

"we have taken the trouble to take legal advice ourselves, and the advice that we have received confirms the insurers' position . . . However, we were under the mistaken impression that we were paying a large amount of money to Blue Chip Insurers for comprehensive cover under any circumstances. A glance at our records will show that this particular policy has been very profitable to the insurance company and they could well afford to meet this claim in full and still show a handsome profit over the years. The third party is a seventeen year old toolmaker apprentice who is being forced to take a taxi to work because there is no other form of public transport available and he does not have the money to repair his vehicle."

That is quite as bad a case as the one that I originally quoted. In some respects it is rather worse. The case has not been resolved, although I very much hope that it will be resolved, either as a result of my reference to it today or as a result of correspondence that has already been embarked on between those concerned.

I suspect that there are a great many such cases but that they may not all have come to light. Perhaps this debate will have the effect of bringing more of them to light. If it does, I welcome it.

I have further evidence to put to my hon. Friend the Minister. By chance, I have heard of another case. A man and his wife were driving along the motorway in April 1986 when the car that was overtaking them suffered a burst tyre, collided with their car and turned it completely over. They ended up on the hard shoulder, mercifully uninjured, although they were severely shaken. Their car was virtually a write-off. They had only third party fire and theft cover. The insurers of the other party said that their driver had not been negligent and that they were under no obligation to meet the costs of the accident and the writing off of the car.

None of the cases that I have quoted involved injury. My hon. Friend may tell me that had injury resulted from any of these incidents, the position might have been different. Of course, it might have been different for a variety of reasons. The accident victimes might have had cover against personal injury. The Motor Insurers Bureau, or Lloyd's, might have taken a different view. The case might have been pursued in court on the grounds that, although negligence was denied there must have been negligence.

When discussing this matter with friends in the legal profession, I heard of a case some years ago in which a

milkman on his early morning round drove in the dark into a tree that had been blown across the road. He was quite severely injured. After a great deal of diligence on the part of the legal experts, his counsel was able to establish in court that the owner of the tree was negligent, in that he had not inspected the tree in question regularly enough to be sure that it would not fall across the road.

In cases of that kind there is a great deal at stake. Personal injury accidents can result, rightly, in substantial damages. In many cases the threat of legal action is probably sufficient to result in a settlement out of court. However, in cases where the sums involved are relatively small — for example, under £1,000 — very few people would be advised to incur the expense of going to law. In most cases, if not in all, it has to be written off as sheer bad luck. The unfortunate victim is left wiser but sadder and knows, as a result of his own bitter experience, what he ought to have been aware of and what he should have been told at a much earlier stage.

As I have said, I am not arguing the case for a no-fault compensation scheme. However, I know that there is some consultation at Government level about the adequacy of our existing insurance arrangements. In fact, I have been fortunate enough to obtain a copy of a Department of Transport press notice, No. 451 of 10 October 1984. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be instantly familiar with it because it releases comments made by him about the extension of compulsory motor insurance to liability for property damage. I remind my hon. Friend that on that occasion he said:

"My Department is canvassing opinion on changes to extend our compulsory insurance laws to include liability for property damage, in response to an EC Directive which aims to achieve a measure of harmonisation of motor insurance laws throughout the Community. The Directive must be implemented by the end of 1988, but I want to secure improvements to our domestic motor insurance arrangements well before then. I look forward to the proposed extension of compulsory insurance and of the Uninsured Drivers Agreement with the Motor Insurers' Bureau. I want to ensure that accident victims can generally expect to be compensated for damage to their property — including, of course, their vehicles — caused by negligent drivers, even where the driver responsible is uninsured."

I return to a point that I made earlier. I want to ensure that accident victims can generally expect to be compensated for damage to their property and vehicles caused by drivers who are not negligent but whose insurance companies say that they are not prepared to accept liability for the accident, retreating behind the act of God defence.

My first request is that my hon. Friend should enter into further discussions on that in the near future with the insurance industry. However, until those discussions bear fruit, as I hope they might, I should like to ask him one other thing. Will he take some action to ensure that drivers are warned of the risks that they may quite inadvertently run, especially young drivers, who the insurance companies think are the worst risks and who are thus faced with the highest premiums? They should be able to make an informed judgment about whether it is worth taking out comprehensive rather than third party cover. The insurance companies that provide cover, especially for young motorists, might turn their attention to doing something to fill that gap.

This problem should be known to people. I may not be right, but it seems that the highway code is the right place in which to put such a warning. I realise that a new edition of the highway code has just been published and that it would be expensive to demand that it be reprinted. However, on another occasion, I might have a go at the Minister about the curious omission from the highway code of any advice and guidance about driving in the dark. That has surprised me now that I have studied the code as carefully as I have as, I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you always do. However, if the highway code is not the right place for a warning, may I ask that a warning should still be given and that the drivers should be allowed to make the choice in an informed state of mind, rather than in total ignorance.

If, at the end of the day, public pressure builds up to a point where the insurance company are obliged, or think it right, to revise the forms of cover that they offer, that would not be a bad thing. However, it is a bad thing that in such cases anyone can take refuge in legal technicalities, when the right answer is a change of attitude.

10.34 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): My hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) has given the House a valuable opportunity to consider a subject which, as he has said, causes a good deal of understandable concern to the unfortunate few who find themselves in similar circumstances to his constituent, and to the other cases that he mentioned. Mercifully, I am informed that there are few such cases. However, my hon. Friend mentioned and has written to us about, several of them. We would welcome details of the third case that he mentioned, relating to the engineering firm because, from what he said, that case seemed to involve comprehensive insurance and damage to the insurer's own vehicle, which damage should, perhaps, have been covered. Perhaps my hon. Friend could give us further details about that.

Mr. Onslow: I shall be glad to do that. Part of the problem is that the victim of the accident was riding a small motor cycle and was run into from behind by a large truck. The truck did not suffer any damage. However, even if the truck had been damaged, I am not sure that my hon. Friend would be right in thinking that that carried a contingent liability to pay for the damage to the motor cycle.

My hon. Friend said that there are few such accidents. If he has evidence to that effect, I hope that he will let the House have it now. However, if he does not have any real evidence about how many such accidents occur, I hope that he will undertake to ensure that some steps are taken to establish the facts. I suspect that if, in a short time in my constituency, I can find two cases within 12 months, there must be about 1,000 cases at any one time in the country.

Mr. Spicer: As my hon. Friend has already said, one of the benefits of this debate is that it may well raise the level of public knowledge about such matters. At the moment, all I can say is that we are informed that motor accidents in which nobody has been negligent are rare. However, as he has implied, there is no reliable record of their number. We have to go on the fact that the Association of British Insurers, which draws on the experience of most motor insurers in the United Kingdom, has confirmed that cases in which there is no negligence are rarely brought to its

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attention. I repeat that it may well be that, as a result of this valuable airing of the subject that my hon. Friend has initiated, we may receive better information on the subject.

It goes without saying that, like my hon. Friend, I have great sympathy for people who find themselves in the unenviable position of having suffered injury, or had their property damaged in an accident, and have nowhere to turn to for compensation. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to an aspect of the law of liability, which is not widely known. Some people may, as a result of the debate, be in a position to take out their own insurance to protect themselves against the monetary consequences of such an accident.

The principle from which the problem arises goes beyond motor insurance, which is my Department's responsibility. The law of civil liability relates to accidents of all sorts, and is primarily a matter for the Lord Chancellor. It may help if I take a few moments to outline the legal position.

It is a fundamental principle of British law that payment of compensation following an accident depends on proof of negligence by the person claimed to be responsible. There is no automatic right to compensation simply on the grounds that the victim of the circumstance was himself or herself free from any blame. Whether the allegedly responsible person has third party insurance does not affect this over-riding principle. Either he is responsible for the accident or he is not. If he is, he is liable to compensate the person who has suffered loss. He may do so from his own pocket, or call upon his insurance, where he has it.

That is not confined to accidents involving motor vehicles. Where injury or damage is caused in other ways, say a tile falling from a roof, the same principle applies. To sum up, whatever the insurance position, the victim has no legal right to compensation until negligence has been established. When we extend compulsory insurance to property the principle about negligence will be unaffected. Indeed, it is unaffected by the present compulsory legislation with respect to injury.

That brings me to the specific area of difficulty that my hon. Friend has identified. His constituent was involved in an accident in which her parked car was written off when another car ran into it. Fortunately, she was not injured. So far as I am aware, there was no suggestion that my hon. Friend's constituent was in any way at fault.

Mr. Onslow *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend confirms that. But there was equally no suggestion of negligence by the other driver involved: she suffered an unpredictable stroke at the wheel. The accident was classed as what is sometimes known as an "act of God", and so my hon. Friend's constituent received no compensation for the loss of her car from the other driver's insurer.

I readily sympathise with the apparent injustice which my hon. Friend's constituent sees in her situation, and I can understand the feeling that insurance companies should be required to pay in such cases regardless of any proof of negligence. After all, as my hon. Friend said, they look big enough to bear such a burden without really noticing it. But this supposes a direct relationship between the victim of the circumstance and someone else's insurer. Such a connection does not exist unless it is established through the someone else being at fault for the accident.

An insurer and his policyholder are parties to a private contract under which the insurer, in return for the premium, undertakes to meet the policyholder's liabilities under civil law. In the sort of case my hon. Friend has described, no such liability arises, the contract places no obligations on the insurer, and there is no basis for a connection between the insurer and the person who has suffered damage.

I recognise that my hon. Friend's purpose in raising this subject today is not to suggest that insurers behave improperly under the law as it stands, or in relation to their contractual position. Rather he is suggesting that either the law should be changed—that was implicit in his opening remarks—or, at least, that road users should be warned of some of the pitfalls which exist for accident victims. I shall return to that point.

So far as changes in the law are concerned, I can understand from the blameless victim's point of view the attraction of a system that would avoid the sometimes uncertain process of proving negligence. But this would be a major departure from a long established principle, which could not be considered in isolation from the repercussions for other types of accidents. My hon. Friend specifically said that he was not arguing for a no-fault scheme, but it is worth dwelling for a moment on the proposals which have existed for such a scheme.

The House will recall that this question of paying compensation without establishing negligence was among those covered in 1978 by the royal commission on civil liability and compensation for personal injury under the chairmanship of Lord Pearson. The royal commission had in mind a central compensation fund, financed from a levy on the price of fuel. Accident victims could be compensated from this fund according to the extent of their injuries without taking negligence into account. The need to prove negligence following a road accident would be removed, at least for the initial entitlement to compensation.

The royal commission's proposals were not designed to cater specifically for the sort of case that has led to this debate today. They dealt with injury, not damage to property. But they are highly relevant to my hon. Friend's concerns in that they reflected the commission's more general criticisms of the law which requires proof of negligence as a basis for the payment of compensation.

Even if such compensation arrangements were restricted to road accidents they would have involved considerable costs. The Department of Health and Social Security estimated that about 1,000 staff, including 200 doctors, would be needed for the full implementation of such a no-fault scheme—and that is only for motor accidents.

Groups representing the disabled made the point forcefully that the proposed scheme would effectively discriminate between those killed and injured on the roads and other accident victims. Extending the scope of the system further to accommodate cases of property damage would exacerbate those particular problems, and the discrimination which disabled groups have seen would be implicit.

Mr. Onslow: A reason why I said specifically that I was not arguing for a no-fault compensation scheme was that

when my hon. Friend wrote to me he set out the line of argument that he has just deployed in the House. It may help him to know of a further and even more powerful persuader in the form of the Lord Chancellor, to whom I wrote on the same subject. He said that if a no-fault compensation scheme were introduced here

"it would certainly lead to vastly increased premiums, and questions like contributory negligence and causation would inevitably arise."

That would open the way for additional man hours in the legal system, so clearly we need a better, simpler solution which does not involve a great deal of litigation.

Mr. Spicer: It is always useful to hear the Lord Chancellor's wisdom. The way he spares the use of legal time, in this instance as in others, is commendable. Nevertheless, as my hon. Friend raised the subject I felt that it was worth reminding ourselves about the possibility of such a scheme and of its disadvantages.

My hon. Friend suggested that road users should at least be warned of the difficulties that they could face in an accident which is nobody's fault. In particular, he suggested that the highway code could integrate such a warning, and in many respects that suggestion is attractive. As he said, the highway code is widely available and is directed not only at drivers, but a complete range of road users. The section entiled "The law's demands" already gives advice on insurance cover required by law, but, as my hon. Friend rightly said, the highway code focuses on the legal requirement for insurance.

However, my hon. Friend has said that the advice should go rather further than simply pointing out the legal requirement, and that is where we get into some difficulties on this method of advertising the problem. The highway code reminds motorists of the general need for insurance as well as for licensing, testing, taxation and so on. Insurance is part of the range of legal requirements that it puts into the small print. However, it is not designed to give detailed advice on these matters. It is a code of behaviour, rather than a do-it-yourself legal guide.

My hon. Friend will know that a revised version of the highway code has just been published. The amendments are almost all about improving safety, and my hon. Friend has given some advice to the House, which I will pass on to my hon. Friend the Minister who is responsible for roads. The code covers a number of new aspects of driving such as drinking and driving, car telephones, child restraints and so on. However, motorists need much more specific advice on insurance than that which a code of behaviour can give. They must have advice that takes into account individual circumstances and requirements. The insurance companies are willing to give such advice and it is part of their business to do so.

This debate will have helped to reinforce the need for motorists to think carefully about precise insurance needs and to ask themselves whether there are gaps in those needs. One of them may be the problem, raised by my hon. Friend today of whether there is any negligence involved. Even bearing in mind that the majority of the country reads *Hansard* the day after our debates, my hon. Friend will accept that not all motorists will, tomorrow morning, have the benefit of studying his advice. Therefore, there is a case for the Government giving wider publicity to the problem.

Today I have asked the driver and vehicle licensing centre at Swansea to consider including with the vehicle licensing reminders advice on the considerations that drivers need to take into account when buying insurance. By this means, we can provide a great majority of drivers with basic advice on which to base their decisions on whether to purchase insurance to protect their own interests should they be involved in the kind of accident about which we have heard today, and the circumstances that might apply.

Mr. Onslow: That last point is a welcome development, but I wonder whether my hon. Friend could not do slightly more than send a reminder out with the motor vehicle licence renewal form. By the time one comes to renew a vehicle licence, one will have been driving for 12 months and if one is driving a car that one does not own, one will never see the form.

Having hastily fished my driving licence out of my pocket and seen that it still has a few years to run, I will not recommend that the advice that my hon. Friend so wisely decided to make available should be sent with driving licence renewal forms. However, we could append such advice to the driver licence application forms in the first place. As soon as a driver applies for his first licence, he will be made aware of insurance. That is the moment when he first goes on the road and when he is first at risk, and it would seem sensible to give him all the information then and not a year later, when he comes for renewal of his provisional licence or upgrades it for a full licence. Perhaps my hon. Friend will have a word with the DVLC about that possibility.

I suspect that one of the reasons why the instance of this type of problem is thought to be rare is that people do not press the point with the insurance companies, and the police never get to know about the accident figures because non-injury accidents do not figure in police statistics. A sampling exercise would be justifed, and I hope that my hon. Friend will feel able to pursue that matter as well.

Mr. Spicer: Those are useful suggestions, and I will consider the sampling exercise point. I am not sure how one would set about that, given, as I understand it, the small base from which one would be working. One would have to carry out a large exercise to pick up any focus on the small amount of data that would be forthcoming.

I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion about including this advice on the licence application form. There are two considerations that have come to me about that, off the top of my head. The first is that with the age-to-70 licence, a vast number of people would already have got through the net of my hon. Friend's suggestion and will continue to remain outside it because they will not be applying for a licence renewal until they are 70. To meet my hon. Friend's point, we must do something with greater urgency than that suggestion would imply.

Secondly, there is the problem, which has been a running theme throughout the debate, of knowing where to stop with the detail of advice. One could end up by suggesting particular insurance companies that are better than others, and that is clearly not the role that the Government would wish to undertake. On the application form point, the question is how much further one could go than the highway code in saying tht one must be insured. I will consider that point because at the moment we are working out a form of words with Swansea that would be appropriate to carry out what my hon. Friend

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has been suggesting in warning people about this problem. When we have the form of words, it might be used for other purposes.

I thank my hon. Friend for giving the House an opportunity to discuss this important subject. Although I have not been able to meet one of his precise suggestions —that we should devote space to matters of insurance and liability in the highway code — I have been encouraged by my hon. Friend to give the matter more publicity. My intention is that the message that we shall put out will emphasise the importance of drivers' decisions on insurance and their implications. As my hon. Friend has said, it is manifestly in the interest of motorists to be sure that they understand the cover that they are buying or have bought. The debate has served a valuable purpose in pointing out that fact.

Police (Agents Provocateurs)

11 am

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I wish to use the opportunity that has fallen to my lot to place on record on the Floor of the House—which I consider to be the only proper manner in which to do so—a matter of great public interest and importance, which is of considerable relevance to the rule of law, and to ascertain the public position on the matter that is taken up by the Home Secretary on behalf of the Government. I am grateful for the presence of the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department.

I can put the matter on the record by rehearsing a number of communications that have passed between myself and the Home Secretary in recent months. The issue goes back to 6 November last year when, in a written question, I asked the Home Secretary

"if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to the circumstances in which on or before October 1985 two detective constables represented themselves as having murdered the late Airey Neave."

The Minister replied:

"The right hon. Member's question relates to criminal proceedings now before the courts. It would not be right to comment."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1986; Vol. 103, *c. 532.*]

Therefore, it was not until 21 January that I sought that comment again. I asked whether, the case having been concluded, the Home Secretary would answer my question. I was told:

"I understand that, as part of an operation which led to the conviction of two men for conspiracy to murder, two detectives represented themselves as members of a terrorist organisation. I am informed that the Police made an apology in court for any distress caused to the family of the late Mr. Airey Neave."—[*Official Report*, 21 January 1987; Vol. 108, *c. 559.*]

That seemed to me to disclose such a strange situation that I wrote to the Home Secretary on 23 January, thanking him for his answer to my written question about the story concocted by police agents provocateurs. I continued:

"What I fail to understand and what seems to me to be worthy of investigation is the reason why they chose to claim that particular murder by way of self-advertisement. It may possibly have been because no one has yet been made amenable for that murder: but as you will know the possible political links of it have aroused interest."

The substantive part of the Home Secretary's reply on 10 March was:

"You ask why the two police officers chose to claim responsibility for that particular murder while representing themselves as members of a terrorist organisation. I understand from the Chief Constable of Leicestershire that this choice was not the result of a considered decision by either the officers themselves or their superiors directing the investigation. Rather, at a meeting between the detectives and one of the men later convicted of conspiracy to murder Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, one of the officers spontaneously claimed to have been involved in the murder of Airey Neave, as part of his attempt to portray himself as an IRA assassin. That this was a role-acting response, rather than a planned statement, by the officer, explains why he attributed Airey Neave's death to the IRA, when in fact it was the INLA who claim responsibility for it."

Two matters appear to arise out of those exchanges between myself and the Home Secretary. The first is the use of police agents provocateurs and whether, in the Government's view, it is an appropriate procedure that police officers should present themselves to a member of the public as belonging to a terrorist organisation and

offer to undertake a murder on his or her behalf. That seems to overstep the line that divides the function of an agent provocateur from other investigative activities. It seems to me that for a police officer to act in a way that a member of the public might act and thus place himself in the way of detecting criminal actions or intentions is one thing, but for a police officer to offer to carry out a crime and to advertise himself as a specialist in that type of crime oversteps the line between innocent investigation and the function of agent provocateur, which I have always supposed, perhaps innocently, lay outside the scope of the British police.

I understand that the Home Office is not directly responsible, in the full sense, for provincial police forces; but its advice and opinion have a deep influence, and we should be told the view of the Home Office on the use of police officers as agents provocateurs.

The second question follows from the first. If the use of agents provocateurs is regarded as an appropriate resource of police forces—I hope that that will not be the Minister's reply—at what level should responsibility for that activity be taken? The Home Secretary has told me that in this case the superior officers under whose instructions the operation was carried out had not specified the details and maintained no control over the manner in which it was carried out by the detectives.

If the use of agents provocateurs is to be authorised, the authorisation should be given only at a high level of responsibility in police forces, and full control over so alarming an operation should be maintained by those who cover it with their orders and their responsibilities.

There are two questions. The first is the general question of the use of agents provocateurs by the police, which needs to be cleared up by a comprehensive statement. The second question, which falls within the first, is whether, supposing such operations are countenanced, the responsibility for them and for the detailed way in which they are carried out should be visibly lodged at a high level in the police force concerned.

I hope that, as I drew the attention of the Under-Secretary to my correspondence with the Home Secretary, he was able to be adequately briefed on the two questions that I have put to him. There is no point in my detaining the House further. I hope that the Under-Secretary will be able to deal with both points.

11.7 am

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I have no wish to rain on the parade of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), so I shall be brief.

If the police were not allowed to fulfil a function as agents provocateurs, few of the recent cases of substantial drugs offences and widespread counterfeiting of international currency could have been brought before the courts.

As the law is, there is nothing improper about police being used as agents provocateurs in the English jurisdiction, although there is something improper about their being used as agents provocateurs in the American jurisdiction. It is no defence for an accused person to say that he would not have committed the offence but for the use of an agent provocateur. The only point at which the fact that an agent provocateur was employed can be used in favour of the defendant is in mitigation of the gravity of an offence if he is convicted.

However, in favour of the right hon. Gentleman's argument, I should say that the use of an agent provocateur causes grave concern to juries, lawyers and, I suspect, to the police themselves. There is something un-British about using that device. In my experience, juries rarely convict on the evidence of agents provocateurs unless that evidence is substantiated by strong corroborative evidence. The right hon. Member for South Down is right to say that such evidence should never be used except with the authority of senior police officers who are capable of making precisely the right assessment as to its need. In my recent experience, that requirement has been fulfilled in the British courts and has resulted in a substantial gain to the public, in as much as dangerous criminals and others who have committed serious crimes have been brought to book by its use.

11.10 am

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I wish only to ask a question, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will include a reply to it when he answers the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). As a friend, and as the deputy of Airey Neave when he was the Opposition Front Bench spokesman on Northern Ireland, I wish to ask what progress has been made in apprehending his murderers. Will my hon. Friend, speaking for the Home Office, give me an assurance that the police forces of the United Kingdom will make it a matter of honour to continue with, and not relax, their investigations until those murderers have been brought to justice?

11.11 am

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I apologise for coming in slightly late. I congratulate the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) on making a most important point. I have been involved in two cases in the past, both of which concerned agents provocateurs, and in which charges might not have been laid if the police had not acted in that capacity.

The first involved one of our own hon. Members some time ago, and had to do with homosexual activity. I believe that if an agent provocateur had not been involved in that incident there would have been no charge, investigation or inquiry. If that person had not been approached by the police in the first place, I am not sure whether any offence would have been committed. That concerns me greatly.

The police have a good record of high detection rates, but to create the circumstances in which an offence could be committed and then to charge one of our own Members seems a strange way to behave.

The second case concerned one of my constituents—a Sikh who was recently involved in a Sikh trial in the Birmingham crown court in connection with the Rajiv Gandhi attempted assassination plot. In that case, which has been right through the courts, a young informer approached a couple of people in the case and suggested——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I understand that the case to which the hon. Gentleman is referring is subject to appeal, and may therefore be subject to the sub judice rule of the House.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am not aware of any appeal——

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the case—I see that the Under-Secretary of State is nodding his assent—it would appear, with great respect,

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from the reply that was given to me by the Home Secretary, that that matter is now outside the sub judice rule. I apologise for making that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not know whether the advice that has been tendered to me on the latest state of play in the case can be confirmed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My information is that the matter is subject to appeal. That is my understanding, and if I am wrong, I apologise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Can the Minister advise me whether an appeal has been lodged?

Mr. Hogg: I cannot give the date of the notice of appeal, but I understand that an appeal has been lodged.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been confirmed that an appeal has been lodged, so the case is subject to the sub judice rule of the House.

Mr. Bruinvels: I was not aware of that. What I am trying to say is that, if someone approaches a person and asks him to take part in an activity, he is creating an atmosphere in which an offence can take place at a later date. My concern is that, if that person had not been so approached, no offence would have been committed. I appreciate that all the police want to do is catch as many criminals as they can. I salute the Leicestershire police force—or any other—for its rigour in bringing cases before the courts. I am concerned only that in certain circumstances the police seem to be creating trouble for people in cases such as those that I have described. The police should return to the business of detection, rather than seeking potential villains by becoming villains themselves—albeit temporarily—in the hope that they can bring charges against people in the future.

Of course I acknowledge what was said by my best hon. Friend the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), in view of his experience as a leading Queen's counsel; but I am fearful about the role of the agent provocateur. The police should continue with their normal commitments, such as the detection of crime, and not seek ways of catching potential villains. The law is there to be obeyed. A number of Conservative Back Benchers rebelled over the clause concerning agents provocateurs during the debate on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. The police should be allowed to get on with their normal, honourable job, without going into muddy waters.

11.18 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate and thank the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) for having raised a matter of considerable importance. I shall try to clarify the distinctions between the obtaining of evidence and the action of an agent provocateur. A number of the speeches that have been made — although not the speech of the right hon. Gentleman — have elided the difference. There is a distinction between the role of agent provocateur and the obtaining of evidence. I shall deal with that matter when I comment on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels).

It might be helpful if I begin by defining the rules that govern police conduct in this area before I turn to the particular case and the questions that were raised by the right hon. Member for South Down. It is important that the House knows what an agent provocateur is. It is perhaps most authoritatively defined by the Royal Commission on police powers in 1928, which stated that an agent provocateur is a person who entices another to commit an express breach of the law which he would not otherwise have committed, and then proceeds or informs against him in respect of such an offence.

The critical element is that of enticement or incitement. Merely to report on the criminal activities of another is not to act as an agent provocateur. I see that the right hon. Member for South Down agrees with me. The essential element is the act of enticement or inducement.

The use of agents provocateurs is unlawful. That was stated most authoritatively by the then Lord Chief Justice in the case of Brannan *v.* Peek in 1948. Because it is important, it might be helpful to state that authoritative definition of the law:

He said:

> "It cannot be too strongly emphasised that unless an Act of Parliament provides that for the purpose of detecting offences police officers or others may be sent into premises to commit offences therein—and I do not think any Act does so provide—it is wholly wrong to allow a practice of that sort to take place . . . If the police authorities have reason to believe that offences are being committed in public houses"—

that was the issue at the time—

> "it is right that they should cause watch to be kept by detective officers, but it is not right that they should instruct, allow, or permit a detective officer or constable in plain clothes to commit an offence so that they can say that another person in that house committed an offence."

That case involved illegal betting in a public house, which police officers kept under surveillance. They suspected what was going on and one of them went into the premises and laid a bet. The state of the common law is that which was laid down by the Lord Chief Justice in 1948, and it has received a powerful echo and reinforcement by Home Office guidelines, which have always made it clear that behaving as agents provocateurs is not permitted for members of police forces. Indeed, it is not permitted for their informants either. The relevant guidance is to be found in the Home Office circular to the police on crime and kindred matters, a copy of which is to be found in the Library. The relevant paragraph states:

> "No member of a police force and no public informant should counsel or procure the commission of a crime."

As I have already stressed, that prohibition applies to police officers and to informants who provide police officers with information. The guidance continues:

> "The informant should always be instructed that he must on no account act as agent provocateur, whether by suggesting to others that they should commit offences or encouraging them to do so, and that if he is found to have done so he will himself be liable to prosecution."

That is about as comprehensive a statement of the legal position as could be given. I suspect that it is a statement of the law that would satisfy the right hon. Member for South Down and be supported by my hon. Friends who are sitting below the gangway.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): It is the first time that I have heard the definition to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, and I find it fascinating. It would seem that a police office is allowed to join an organisation that might be provocative, be it on the Right or the Left,

and be accepted as a member of it. Apparently that is perfectly all right, but it is not allowed for him to say, for example, "Next week we shall throw some petrol bombs". If the officer did that he would be acting wrongfully. What is his role if he joins an organisation and becomes involved in informing on people who belong to it? Is that allowable under the law?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important issue and I am not sidetracking when I say that I shall respond to his intervention later. There is a distinction which I shall try to set out in practice.

It is proper for police officers to infiltrate criminal or terrorist organisations. In the ordinary course of that infiltration they must show some enthusiasm for what is going on in the organisation otherwise the infiltration would prove impossible. However, they must not incite or encourage the commission of offences by others. I accept at once that the distinction is sometimes a narrow one and that it is not always easy to adhere to it. On the whole, however, I believe that the police are adhering to it. This is a matter which I should like to return to in the course of my remarks. The hon. Gentleman is right to focus on the practical difficulties that arise in instances where the police have to infiltrate criminal or terrorist organisations.

If the police or their informants are to penetrate organisations, they must get inside them. It would not be possible for police officers to obtain the information that we would wish them to secure if they did not, in the course of making acquaintance with the members of the organisation, show some enthusiasm for the terrorist or criminal conspiracy, or the purpose which its members might have in mind. That is a practical difficulty.

Anyone who acts as an agent provocateur must be alert to the distinction which is reflected in the guidelines and in the judgment to which I have drawn the attention of the House, which I have tried to amplify in my remarks.

To what extent are agents provocateurs used? It is difficult to give a categorical and certain reply to that question, but I can say that since 1969-70 few allegations have been made of the use of agents provocateurs as I determine the term. I have taken the liberty of asking Home Office officials whether they know of such complaints. This is not an authoritative statement, but no one has any recollection of such a complaint. I have made inquiries of the Police Complaints Authority—again, I do not pretend that this is an authoritative answer—and it has no recollection of a complaint being made about the use of an agent provocateur in the sense that I use that term, which is that there must be incitement or encouragement by a police officer or an informant for others to commit a crime. On the whole, the police are adhering strictly to the requirements of the law and the guidance to which I have drawn attention. I cannot be more authoritative than that because there is no material to justify a positive assertion. The approach that I have outlined was accepted in 1969 by the central conference of chief constables and is widely acknowledged and understood.

Mr. Heffer: Were not some complaints made about agents provocateurs during the miners' dispute? I understand that claims were made that certain people who were throwing stones were not miners and were not known to anyone else. These people seemed to disappear into the crowd and then to disappear altogether. Some miners' officials have said that they were known later to be people connected with the police or associated with them in some way.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman refreshes my memory. I accept that those allegations were made during the miners' strike. I am speaking generally—I have not researched this issue—and I believe that I am right in saying that there was no convincing evidence that the persons against whom the complaints were made were police officers. I am dealing now with a rather different situation, which is whether there are complaints about individuals who are certainly police officers in cases that can be identified. The hon. Gentleman is referring to accusations which probably can never be pinned on persons who can be identified conclusively as police officers. However, he has refreshed my memory of the complaints which were made during the miners' strike and I am grateful to him for doing that.

In the case referred to the right hon. Member for South Down and touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East the police force concerned was the Leicestershire constabulary. The instructions that are contained in the Home Office guidelines are reflected in the general orders of that constabulary, as they are in the majority of forces of which I am aware. The case arose from the events which surrounded the visit of the Indian Prime Minister in October 1985. I think that all hon. Members will be aware that the events led to the trial of three Sikhs at Birmingham Crown court. Two of the defendants have been convicted and, as I have indicated, I understand that they have appealed to the Court of Appeal, which means that I must be rather guarded in what I say. I hope that the House will forgive me for taking that approach.

A number of complaints arose, some of which were fully investigated at the time by the trial judge and a number of which have been touched on by right hon. and hon. Members. It has been suggested that the trial of the three sikhs was politically inspired. My information, I must admit, is derived primarily from the chief constable of Leicestershire who was the officer ultimately responsible for the operations. I am assured that there is no truth in the suggestion that this trial or the inquiries that preceded it were in any way politically inspired.

I shall deal with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East. The information which came to the police officers concerning what the Sikhs had in mind came via an informant who was approached by the gentlemen concerned. Once the information had been received by the police, they had to put a full inquiry in hand. The fact that it might in some way have been stimulated by the police officers was given considerable consideration by the trial judge, Mr. Justice McCullough, who commented that the information received by the police was of a kind that clearly justified and, indeed, required full investigation. If my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East is trying to suggest that the police were in some way creating an offence, I must say to him as positively and emphatically as I can that there is no truth whatsoever in such an allegation. The police were responding to information. They then put in police officers who then heard evidence. But there is no truth in the suggestion that they were creating an offence that would otherwise not have been created.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I was trying to make the point that the Leicestershire constabulary used a petty convicted criminal as a sort of informant. He was the person who was put in at the beginning to meet the Sikhs and to record comments such as, "How would you like to dispose of Mr. Gandhi?" That apparently is how it was done. It is all on file. Those people met in a pub in my constituency. From that point, as my hon. Friend the Minister correctly said, the police were then put in. A full meeting took place at the Post House hotel in Leicestershire. My concern is with what happened then. I am saying that, if those police had not become involved at that point, I suspect that no offences would have occurred.

Mr. Hogg: I entirely disagree with my hon. Friend. A serious conspiracy, which could have had tragic results, was going on. Because the police intervened when they did, no tragedy ensued, and those defendants have been convicted and sent to prison. The idea that the police were in some way manufacturing an offence which would not otherwise have occurred is an illusion. It is wrong. It is a mistake. It is an error. I am trying to persuade my hon. Friend that that is the case. He can intervene as often as he likes, but I must say——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister will not act as an agent provocateur. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) may not intervene as often as he wishes.

Mr. Hogg: I am trying to express emphatically that I do not accept my hon. Friend's suggestion, and I think that I have done that. I would perhaps strain the patience of the House if I continued along that line.

The right hon. Member for South Down asked who controls the operation of the agents provocateurs.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Before the Minister comes to that, I should like to put one point to him. If one individual says to another, "I am a very talented professional murderer. I have carried out a number of successful murders" is that not prima facie an enticement to the other person to employ him on that job? What is the meaning, otherwise, of such a conversation?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman is focusing on the real problem that arises. In trying to identify whether a person is an agent provocateur, the question is whether that person is inciting or inducing the commission of a crime. One must judge each case on its facts. For example, if I represented myself as a member of the IRA and sought out custom to kill, clearly I would be acting as an agent provocateur. On the other hand, if I were aware that some people wanted to kill and were putting in hand a conspiracy to kill and I went to them and represented my skills as a killer, there would be no inducement or incitement. I am not trying to dodge the issue or to be over-dogmatic. But there is a very narrow line. We must judge each case on its facts. We must look at the facts of each case bearing in mind the broad policy distinction.

Mr. Lawrence: If I may say so with the greatest respect, there is a danger of being confused about the law concerning the use of agents provocateurs. My hon. Friend began by saying that the concept of agent provocateur was contrary to the law. He cited Lord Chief Justice Goddard in Brannan *v.* Peek, a case in 1948. But, as I understand the law, that is not so. A number of judgments disapprove of agents provocateurs, but if the activity of an agent provocateur were contrary to the law, it would be a defence to say, "I would not have committed this offence but for being induced to do so by an agent provocateur", which it is not. Furthermore, it might be within the discretion of the judge to exclude such evidence, which he is unable to do, according to the law. Is this not the position? Agents provocateurs are not contrary to the law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Briefly.

Mr. Lawrence: Although it is an activity that is disapproved of, it is perfectly lawful for an agent provocateur to act in a way that induces someone to commit a crime that he would not otherwise have committed and, in due course, that person may be properly convicted if that was evidence given against him. The only way in which it may help the defence is, after conviction and to mitigate the extent of the crime, to say, "I was induced to do that by the activity of an agent provocateur". But is it not sometimes difficult for that defence in mitigation to be effectively advanced? A professional criminal must often be taken to know that he might be tricked into——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Member knows that he can speak only once on the motion before the House.

Mr. Hogg: I do not agree with my hon. and learned Friend. Much depends on the definition we give to the expression "agent provocateur". I agree that, if we over-refine it, we get ourselves into difficulty. But I remind my hon. and learned Friend of the Home Office guidance which points to the true position. It states:

> "The informant should always be instructed that he must on no account act as agent provocateur, whether by suggesting to others that they should commit offences or encouraging them to do so, and that if he is found to have done so he will himself be liable to prosecution."

A necessary element in being an agent provocateur is that the person should himself commit a substantive offence which is part of the conspiracy. If one accepts that definition of the agent provocateur, which is the one I am putting to the House, the activity is unlawful. However, if one accepts a wider definition of the meaning of the phrase "agent provocateur" then one may come to a different conclusion. I am inviting the House to take the narrow definition that I have placed before it. It is for that reason that I cannot agree with the proposition put to me by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

The right hon. Member for South Down raised the particular issue of control, but he premised that by the assumption that we were using agents provocateurs as part of police procedure. I have explained to him, and I hope that I have satisfied him, that that is not part of police practice. Therefore, the second part of his question does not arise in that we are not using agents provocateurs nor did we use them in the case to which he referred. Therefore, the question of control does not arise.

I shall turn to a matter of great distress to a number of people, particularly Lady Airey of Abingdon and that is what was said by one of the officers, Constable Tom B —that is how he was described in the trial—to the effect that he had been part of the murder gang that killed the former hon. Member, Airey Neave. The police, the chief constable and everybody involved are deeply sorry for the

distress that may have been caused to Lady Airey of Abingdon. What was said was in no sense preplanned. It was said by an officer at the time in order to try to cloak himself with credibility in the context of what he was trying to discover. It was not a planned statement and it was not in any way part of the operation. It was a statement that he made on the spur of the moment and he very much regrets the distress that he caused. However, I hope that the House will not be too critical of the officer, bearing in mind his dangerous and exposed position. Perhaps it is right that I should mention to the House that the learned Judge Mr. Justice McCullough at the end of the trial went on to say:

"I wish to commend Dectective Constable Tom B and Detective Constable Ian S, both of whom did an extremely good and difficult job and they deserve and get the commendation of the court."

I feel that that is a point that the House would like to take into account when considering what the officers said at the time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) raised an important point regarding the inquiries into the murder of our former colleague, Airey Neave. The facts are known to the House. On 30 March 1979 a small explosive device attached to the car detonated and he was killed. The Irish National Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the murder and its claim has been accepted as valid. That claim was reiterated in a television interview in July 1979 by a masked person who was claiming to speak on behalf of the INLA. I very much regret to say that nobody has been charged in connection with the murder and it would be misleading for me to say that I have any information to suggest that a charge is likely to be made in the immediate or near future. However, like my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest, I very much hope that the police will devote all their efforts to arresting those people. I would very much like to see them before a British court and I hope that one day that happens.

Other questions have been raised. However, all I can do is reiterate to the right hon. Member for South Down that it is not part of police practice to use agents provocateurs. I do not believe that it happened in this case. What was done was the gathering of information and I think, taking a broad view of what happened, that it was a good thing that the police did receive the information that they did and, as a result, it may well be that a serious crime was averted.

Rate Support Grant (Bedfordshire)

11.44 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am delighted to take this opportunity to bring before the House the situation that is now facing my constituents and other residents and businesses in Bedfordshire following the steep rate increase that has been levied upon us in the past few days. I should say at the outset how delighted I am to see my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) in the Chamber I hope that he may catch your eye a little later, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are here with the full support of our hon. Friends the Members for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) and Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and our hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell). I see that my hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security is in the Chamber. My other two hon. Friends have pressing constituency engagements.

Normally a constituency Member will rise with some pride to represent his constituents' interests and that of his county. I was born in Bedfordshire. I was educated there and spent the majority of my working life there. I have lived in the county all my life. However, it is with a sense of shame that I rise today because of what has happened in my county over the past few years and particularly over the past few months.

We are now represented by the Labour and alliance parties, by men and women who are not fit for office. They have shown a total irresponsibility in the way in which they have treated the county's affairs, they have abused the privileged system in which they find themselves and have acted with no thought for others. Indeed, in Bedfordshire with the way in which the political wind is blowing in the Labour and alliance parties, we may well find that we might begin — in fact we are already beginning — to suffer the extraordinary systems and policies that have been followed by what is popularly known as the loony Left. I think that my hon. Friends will agree that it may not be too long before we see the red flag flying over county hall in Bedford. For a county with a proud record of achievement and of looking after its residents and businesses, that is a disgrace. Therefore, we thought it fit to bring the matter before the House this morning.

We have suffered the highest rate increase of any shire county in the country—21·3 per cent. For the domestic ratepayer that means an additional 23·4 per cent. That comes on top of a rate increase last year of 18·4 per cent. In other words, in real terms, including inflation, my constituents are facing a rate increase of nearly 50 per cent. over two years. That is a record of which we are not proud and one that the House should look at in relation to other rate increases that have taken place in surrounding counties.

During the various Budget deliberations that took place, my own group on the council proposed an increase of 10·7 per cent. That is rather higher than many of us would like to see but it would have been a standstill budget that retained services and would have meant that the people of Bedfordshire would not have had quite such a levy to bear. The Labour group proposed 23·8 per cent. and the alliance group 23 per cent. The two groups came together, I believe in a private house not far from where I live, and cobbled together an agreement that has meant

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this massive swingeing increase. It was, of course, passed by those two groups in the face of the fiercest opposition from the Conservative group.

At this point I should like to pay tribute to Councillor Philip Hendry, leader of the Conservative group on the Bedfordshire county council, who has done a splendid job over the past few years trying to keep our affairs in order.

After the budget had been agreed there was a split among the Liberal members, which may be enlarged upon by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West. However, the alliance leader, Mrs. Janice Lennon, who I believe is a prospective parliamentary candidate for Bedfordshire, North, said,

"I support this budget totally."

Therefore this budget, which to the outside observer would be considered a Labour budget, has full alliance support and never let it be said otherwise.

The record of spending in Bedfordshire is not good. That record goes back to pre-1977 days when the Labour council was in office spending money like water and using resources that it did not have. That council left as a legacy to the incoming Conservative group in 1977 a debt charge that, in effect, made Bedfordshire, at that time, the highest spending county. Between 1977 and 1986 the then Conservative-controlled council tried desperately, in the face of fierce opposition from the other parties, to rein Bedfordshire's spending. The Conservative group pulled Bedfordshire back from being first in the league of high spenders to being about 10th or 11th in the league in 1986.

Recent Audit Commission reports for 1984-85 and 1985-86 confirm that, in seven services out of eight, the county council of Bedfordshire was spending more than the others of the family of five—my hon. Friend the Minister will know what I mean by that. On education, social services, police, fire, libraries and highways and other services Bedfordshire was overspending against the other counties. It was only in the matter of refuse disposal, which used the county's resources, that it was at any advantage.

In 1985-86 the council's spending on education was 15 per cent. more than the family average—that is the latest figure available from the Audit Commission. The county was spending 14 per cent. more than the family average on social services. Overall there was an overspend of 11 per cent. If the children of Bedfordshire were receiving a better education than the children of other counties perhaps my complaint would not be so loud. If our schools were in better order than other counties perhaps I would have some support for that spending spree. If the old people and those in residential care were better off than those in other counties and were receiving better care perhaps one might be able to say that such expenditure was justified. However, when that money is being spent and the services are still not up to the family average I believe that we have cause to complain.

Within the past few months we have learnt, as a result of a survey carried out by the university of Sheffield on O-level results, that Bedfordshire comes 87th out of the 91 local education authorities. The county council has overspent every single year, but it has not given the ratepayers value for money.

Indeed, since 1985 when the Conservatives lost control at the election, the county council has seen fit to spend money on what many would describe as spurious objectives. For example, Bedfordshire has become a nuclear-free zone. Some £50,000 was spent to achieve that end. I should like to say in passing that I am delighted to note that the Conservative group of the council has put down a motion for the next council meeting congratulating my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her talks in Moscow. I hope that those talks will make the people of Bedfordshire sleep more easily in their beds and I hope that those talks will do away with the necessity of the nonsense of the nuclear-free zone in Bedfordshire.

The council has also spent money on anti-South African activities. It has spent money to support the anti-apartheid movement and on distributing literature to local district and parish councils. It has spent money to try to encourage African National Congress speakers to come to Bedfordshire. It has spent money encouraging the Bedfordshire youth orchestra, of whom we are very proud, to play, as described by the council. "anti-racist tunes". That represents money and time that should have been spent in other ways. If the councillors were spending the money wisely perhaps the luxury of worrying about people some 6,000 miles away would be justified. However, that money has not been spent wisely. Moreover, I have not been able to discover, at any time, exactly how much money has been spent.

Even the education department at county hall is now dictating what type of films should be shown in schools. I am indebted to my friend councillor Philip Hendry who informed me that, only last week, two films were to be shown to the children at a local school in the Bedford constituency. One was a pro-CND film and the other was a NATO film. The former film, the CND film, was the only film that was allowed to be shown by the school.

In the past few weeks the council has produced various forms of literature that are published under the names of the three leaders. However, as a result of the majority verdict, the Labour and alliance leaders outvote the Conservative leader every time. However, the literature is still produced as if it comes from the county council. Needless to say, the literature is full of untruths. I go so far as to say that much of it is downright lies. Nowhere does it give credence to the policy that the council has followed. Indeed, most of it is anti-Government and misleading to the electorate of Bedfordshire.

The great cry all the time from the Labour and alliance groups is on the basis that the blame for the rate support grant cuts that we have experienced lies entirely with the Government. In none of the literature is the truth explained.

The truth is simply this. I am indebted to my hon. Friend the Minister for the reply that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West on 1 April, when he said:

"Bedfordshire county council's grant entitlement for 1987-88 amounts to £37·2 million at the level of expenditure we estimate it has budgeted for. This is £8·2 million less than it would have received if it spent at the settlement spending assumption—that is a 5·25 per cent. increase on current expenditure—and £9·9 million less than if it had increased expenditure in line with inflation. These entitlements and Bedfordshire's budget include the estimated effects of the teachers' pay deal."—[*Official Report*, 1 April, 1987; Vol. 113, c. *549*.]

In other words, the overspend that those two groups have made their policy in Bedfordshire has meant that for every pound that they overspend, a further 73p has to be found from the ratepayers. How they have the gall to

blame the Government for such an overspend when they have deliberately gone out of their way to increase expenditure by some 12 per cent., one begins to wonder.

The most tragic thing about the rate increase is its effect upon the people of Bedfordshire. I know that my hon. Friends will support me in that, from the correspondence and literature that they have received from constituents. For example, pensioners, who at all times are on a tight budget, but many of whom have prudently saved and live in their own homes, are now faced with a massive increase of 23 per cent. Those on low incomes who have saved hard to buy their own homes, particularly first-time buyers, now find a tremendous burden put upon them, over which they have no control.

Perhaps most telling of all is the fact that businesses in Bedfordshire are bound to suffer. I am indebted to Luton chamber of commerce, which covers the whole county, for giving me various figures for the businesses that will be affected by the rate increases. The chairman of the rates committee told me that at the committee's most recent meeting the members sat in horrified silence to hear the size of the rise that they faced, whith which they and their businesses would have to cope.

A consultation process was put into being by the Government in 1983, so that certain sections of the community could have a say or express an opinion on what the rates should be. That process has broken down completely in Bedfordshire. There was short notice of consultation. People were informed on the Friday of a meeting the following Tuesday. At that time, the proposed rate increase was about 16·7 per cent. The chamber of commerce is bitter that the protests that it made went unheard by the Labour and Liberal groups. Indeed, those groups do not seem to have any idea of the effect that their rate increase will have on commerce in the county.

New firms are bound to be discouraged. In particular, we in the south of the county are trying to encourage new businesses into an area where we have an excellent railway and road system, an international airport, offices and premises at cheap rents, and a pleasant environment. Those businesses will be discouraged because of the proposed rate increase.

Ironically, on local radio this morning, I heard the prospective Labour candidate for Luton, South say that he was concerned that the rate of unemployment in the Luton area was now above the national level, so there must be urgent talks about what to do about that. That was said by someone with a great responsibility for his party and those whom he hopes to represent in the area. It is nonsense for him and others to talk about loss of jobs at the same time as handing out such a rate increase to local businesses. Vauxhall Motors, the largest employer in my constituency faced a rate increase of more than £2 million. I can tell the work force that if the wage increase that they are looking forward to this year is cut, they must look to the Labour and alliance councillors to discover where some of the money that might have gone into their pockets has gone.

Only last week I had a meeting with small shopkeepers in one part of Luton. Three or four of them said quite emphatically that this would probably be the last 12 months that they will be in business because they cannot cope with such a rate increase. The only way in which they can hope to save any money is by laying people off or sacking them. In other words, there will be a direct loss of jobs as a result of what has happened.

I have no doubt that the villains of the piece of this particular sorry tale are those members of the alliance party within the county. We expect Labour councils to act irresponsibly, to spend money that they do not have and not to consider the welfare or well-being of their constituents. We perhaps do not expect that from the alliance. Bedfordshire has shown without any doubt that the alliance councillors are as much villains of the piece as their Socialist counterparts. They went along with the budget and are completely oblivious of the misery and devastation that the budget will cause to my constituents and others throughout the county. The blame must lie with those alliance councillors. The only hope is that when the Government are returned after a general election — probably within the next few weeks—we might through the new community charge and rating system be able to bring some relief to those particularly hard-pressed ratepayers. Those ratepayers must remember where the blame lies in this sorry tale.

12.2 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) for allowing me to intervene for a few minutes in the debate. I congratulate him on winning a place in the ballot. We are both delighted that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) is present to support us in this very important debate about Bedfordshire's rates.

It is important to consider a little of the history to understand how the 1987-88 settlement was decided. The history of the past six or seven months is so often distorted by those people who have supported the huge rate increase.

In October 1986, the Government put forward proposals for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement and invited representations. The October proposals — and I stress "proposals" — caused immense concern in Bedfordshire. While others were complaining and grizzling about the position, the Conservatives in Bedfordshire were acting. By that I mean that the Conservative group leader Philip Hendry and some of my hon. Friends and myself went to see my hon. Friend the Minister who will be replying to this debate to discuss the October proposals. As a result of those discussions, I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government dated 3 December 1986 in which my hon. Friend states:

> "After full consideration . . . we have decided to revise the earlier proposals."

In other words, he had decided to revise the October proposals. My hon. Friend went on to say in his letter:

> "Bedfordshire County Council was one of those authorities who, under our original proposals, stood to lose a substantial amount of grant. Although . . . the new proposals for a tighter safety net would"

result in Bedfordshire having—

> "an improvement of £3·1 million."

I stress that my hon. Friend said that there would be "an improvement of £3·1 million" on the October proposals.

Those members of the county council who study those matters knew about the letter and the improvement. Some reacted predictably by simply saying that it would make no difference and they started up their new proposals for more big spending. Some, in my view, acted with what I would call hesitant indignation. They were not sure how to play this one. They did not know how it would affect what rate they would levy. They did not expect an

[Mr. David Madel]

improvement. Having spent from October to December, complaining and grizzling about the position, but not doing anything, when the Conservatives did something —to which I have already referred—they did not know how to play it.

The Conservatives then got on with preparing a budget for the forthcoming year, which provided for a rate increase of 10·7 per cent. They arrived at their budget using precisely the same process as they used in 1986. They took the level of inflation and the percentage of loss of grant, and arrived at a percentage rate increase as a result. They took a 6 per cent. loss of grant and a 4 per cent. to 5 per cent. rate of inflation. When they considered the large percentage of the education budget covered by teachers' salaries and the fact that the education budget represents between 65 per cent. and 70 per cent. of Bedfordshire county council's total budget, the Conservatives at county hall thought that the proposed rate increase of 10·7 per cent. was as reasonable as possible.

The question then follows: why are we having this argument about the loss of rate support grant? Instead of concentrating on that budget and what it would have meant for Bedfordshire, the alliance and Labour members constantly went on about the loss of grant. That point was adequately covered by my hon. Friend the Minister in answer to a question from me on 1 April. He said:

"It is Bedfordshire county council's decision to increase expenditure by 12·0 per cent, including additional expenditure arising from the teachers' pay deal, which has resulted in the reduced grant entitlement."

Earlier in his answer, my hon. Friend said:

"Bedfordshire county council's grant entitlement for 1987-88 amounts to £37·2 million . . . This is £8·2 million less than it would have received if it spent at the settlement spending assumption."—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1987, Vol. 113, c. *549*.]

County councillors know how the system works. They know that if they spend above a certain level, grant will be lost. They know the consequences of their actions, but they will not face up to them. The ratepayers will have to face the consequences of the actions of the Bedfordshire county councillors who voted for this huge rate increase. They are forgetting the people whom they represent.

My hon Friend the Member for Luton, North mentioned the effect on businesses. I can quote the rate bill for Delco Products — an extremely important firm in Dunstable and one of the largest employers in the county. In 1986-87, Delco's rate bill was £464,779 — or nearly half a million pounds. For 1987-88, it will have to pay another 21 per cent., which is bad news for such a major firm.

But there is more to come. In the *Beds and Bucks Observer* of 7 April, Mr. J. M. Hudson of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Business wrote to the editor saying this:

"I would advise you that the first casualty of this 23·4 per cent. increase has been reported to us this week. A small engineering workshop is closing at the end of the March as it is unable to finance a further rate increase of just over £500 a year. The owner, having taken a salary cut to cope with last year's increase, does not feel inclined to accept another of £10 per week this year. No doubt those Labour and Liberal councillors who forced through this totally unacceptable and unwarranted increase will be delighted that their policy is already taking effect and has put three more people on the unemployment register."

I say to the county councillors who voted for the rate increase, "Read that letter carefully and ask yourselves about your attitude to employment in Bedfordshire in 1986. Did you express immense concern as we went through all those difficulties with General Motors? Do you mean it when you say that you want more jobs in Bedfordshire, and that you are 'very worried' about the position? If you do mean it, you should pay attention to Mr. Hudson's letter, and see where the policies for which you voted are leading Bedfordshire."

Before deciding the rate increase for 1987-88, the county councillors should have considered a number of factors. First, they should have considered the employment level in the county, especially after all the difficulties in 1986 caused by the loss of jobs in General Motors. Members of Parliament constantly receive propaganda notices from county hall saying that such and such a committee is very worried about the increase in unemployment. County councillors rush around Bedfordshire and down to London for meetings, hardly pausing for breath as they tell us how worried they are. But when they had the chance to do something, what did they do? That is what this debate is about: they made a huge increase in the rates.

The county councillors should also have considered owner-occupiers of modest means. Many families in Bedfordshire can just manage to afford a house and to pay the mortgage, but the price tag to a house incorporates not only the mortgage and the capital cost, but the rates. The county councillors should have taken that into account.

Thirdly, the county councillors should have considered the need to attract skilled people to the county. I include teachers in that definition, as teaching is a skilled profession. That is another grumble that we hear constantly: county councillors are very worried because it is difficult to attract teachers to such and such a school, as teachers living in other parts of the country cannot afford houses in Bedfordshire. They write letters to newspapers and talk about their concern on the radio, but when it comes to doing something to help, they do something that does not help at all.

Finally, the county councillors should have considered, and should consider again and again, that houses in Bedfordshire are not cheap. Why make them still more expensive with a large increase in the rates?

But the county councillors did none of those things. Instead, they drew up a shopping list of spending, made a clumsy attempt to hide the price and eventually came out with the rate increase. Before fixing the rate, they should have asked a central, guiding question: what could they reasonably ask domestic and business ratepayers to pay, bearing in mind the general economic position in Bedfordshire? People's ability to pay should be uppermost in county councillors' minds.

I used the words "general economic position"; that means employment, and the need to bring more businesses into the county. But that issue was not considered, or, if it was, it was not put at the top of the list. People in Bedfordshire are being asked to pay an unreasonable amount. The inescapable truth is that Bedfordshire county council is living beyond its means—or, rather, beyond the domestic and commercial means of its ratepayers, for it is they who are carrying the can.

it need not have happened. There was an improvement in December, and the rate increase could have been much more reasonable. However, the planned Conservative budget for a more reasonable increase was voted down.

My hon. Friends and I are constantly bombarded by county councillors with suggestions of what we should do to help Bedfordshire. We know that there is plenty to be done, and we are trying to do it. But the supreme thing that we are trying to do—it is why we are here today—is to ensure that the county council lives within its means, and that the cost of living for the people of Bedfordshire is reasonable. We think that what has been proposed is unreasonable and unacceptable. It will do no good for domestic or business ratepayers, and the county councillors who voted for it will have to face the consequences one day.

12.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) on securing this debate and on giving me the opportunity to explain the rate support grant settlement for Bedfordshire county council for 1987-88. Also I congratulate him and my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on telling the House so vividly of the horror story for the Bedfordshire ratepayer at present of a socialist council—comprising those who call themselves Socialists, the Labour party, and members of the alliance parties who deny that they are Socialists—that is implementing Socialist policies with a vengeance.

I remind the House of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said about the settlement in the debate on the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88. He said:

"we have provided a generous settlement for local authorities. The aggregate Exchequer grant of £12,842 million is an increase of over £1 billion—9 per cent. more than in the settlement for 1986-87. Provision for local authority current expenditure at £25,251 million is 13 per cent. more than last year. Those figures exclude the additional provision of £460 million, and the grant of £183 million which we have said will be made available for the teachers' pay settlement for 1987-88." — [*Official Report*, 25 March 1987; Vol. 113 c.440.]

The settlement allows for non-rate-capped authorities to increase their current expenditure by 5·25 per cent. When teachers' pay is taken into account, that will allow education authorities to increase their expenditure by 7·75 per cent. Those increases are more than the rate of inflation that we expect next year, which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast in the Financial Statement and Budget report to be 4·5 per cent. on the GDP deflator. Therefore, there is no reason why prudent and responsible authorities could not have chosen to set reasonable budgets and rates.

As we have heard, Bedfordshire county council has set a precept for the current year of 232·20p in the pound, a 21·3 per cent. increase on its precept for 1986-87. This is the largest increase of any shire county and follows the 18·8 per cent. increase in its precept for 1986-87. Bedfordshire now has the fifth highest precept of all shire counties.

It seems that the people who are now running the county council are determined to undo the fine work that was done by the Conservatives when they were running the county council. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the fine work of Philip Hendry and the members of the Conservative group not only when they were running the council but also now, when they are trying to expose the absurdities that are being perpetrated by those who are running Bedfordshire county council.

Between 1978-79 and 1985-86, the level of expenditure in Bedfordshire was kept constant, in real terms. That was a real achievement by the Conservatives, because most other councils were increasing their expenditure to some extent. However, they managed to use the fat that they had inherited to ensure that good services were provided at reasonable cost. However, within the space of two years since the Conservatives lost overall control of the council, expenditure has increased by over 20 per cent., in real terms.

The increase this year of 12 per cent. is nearly three times the expected level of inflation. As has already been pointed out, that has resulted in a reduction in its grant entitlement and to a 21 per cent. increase in the precept. If Bedfordshire had budgeted to increase its expenditure in line with inflation and to finance the teachers' pay deal, it would have received £47·3 million in grant—slightly more than for this year. In those circumstances, it would have needed to increase its precept by only 5·3 per cent. However, the county has decided to increase its expenditure by 9·5 per cent. to £230·3 million, excluding the costs of the proposed teachers' pay deal.

We estimate that this year Bedfordshire's expenditure, including an allowance for the teachers' pay deal, will be about £235 million. At this level of expenditure, it will receive a block grant of about £37·4 million. The county's decision to increase expenditure above the level of inflation has thus cost it £9·9 million in reduced grant. This grant loss, together with its £25·2 million of increased expenditure, has led to the 21·3 per cent. increase in its precept.

It is significant that while my hon. Friends, together with the leader of the Conservative group, lobbied hard to try to persuade my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to adjust his original proposals for the October settlement — successfully and forcefully acting as always in the interests of their ratepayers—it seems that behind their backs the alliance and Labour parties which were running the council had planned massive increases in expenditure, totally irrespective of the needs and concerns of the people of Bedfordshire. Those Members of Parliament might not have bothered to try to lobby, because I suspect that if we had not listened to their representations the increase might not have been greater than the 21·3 per cent. that was imposed because the Labour and alliance parties might have thought that a higher increase would have been too much, even for them.

While many authorities have sought to restrain their expenditure and have managed to keep their precept increase to low single figures, Bedfordshire and a few other authorities have pursued profligate spending policies at the expense of their ratepayers. It may help if I put that in a national context, because my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North has not only served his constituents well in bringing this matter before the House today but has served the nation well, too. It is a reminder of what happens when the local electorate have short memories and forget that the Liberals and the SDP, when combining with the Labour party in local government, pursue high-spending policies.

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

That is reflected in other precept increases in the shire counties. The average shire county precept increase is 7·9 per cent. In Conservative-controlled counties, precepts will increase, on average, by below that amount, by 6·5 per cent. In Labour-controlled counties, they will increase by an average of 8·7 per cent. In Lib-Lab pact counties, they will rise by 9·1 per cent., and in the one Liberal-controlled county, the Isle of Wight, that figure is 10 per cent. Thus, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said on 26 March, there is a premium for living in a Socialist county and an additional premium for the price of alliance support. Bedfordshire illustrated well the effect of the high—spending policies of authorities that are controlled by a labour and Liberal pact. As I have already stated, its precept increase for this year is the highest of any shire county.

We have already heard of some of the priorities of the new councillors of the alliance and Labour parties. It may be quite a surprise to many people to know that, in Bedfordshire, Liberal and SDP councillors support spending on nuclear-free zones. How absurd such expenditure is, especially when the consequences are so grave for local people.

Examples of other areas in which substantial savings could be made are set out in the Audit Commission's profiles. I invite my hon. Friends to look at the most recent figures for 1986-87, which have just been published. They show, for example, that in primary education, non-teaching costs per pupil in Bedfordshire are £251, which compares with a family average of £230, suggesting potential savings of about £800,000. In secondary education, the non-teaching costs per pupil in Bedfordshire are £408, compared with the family average of £384 which suggests, prima facie, potential savings of £1·1 million. Similarly, there is higher expenditure on the costs per meal of school meals and of the costs per head to the social services of children in care. The cost per head for children in care in Bedfordshire is £6·79, whereas average counties with similar circumstances charge only £3·89. Therefore, there is a potential saving of about £1·5 million.

Mr. John Carlisle: My hon. Friend may also care to note that despite the 16,000 spare school places in Bedfordshire, the Lib-Lab-controlled council now proposes to increase the number of teaching posts. That is yet another example showing that the council has no concern for the education service and is trying to buy votes by increasing the number of posts without taking account of the spare places that exist within the system.

Mr. Chope: That is further evidence of the horror story about the present council and of gross mismanagement. That is not the sort of behaviour that anyone in the private sector would contemplate if there was pressure on the budget. Individual householders living in the county must make real cuts in expenditure to accommodate the increased rates burden. While that sort of attitude prevails, I understand the despair of my hon. Friend for his constituents.

In 1985-86 Bedfordshire spent 0·1 per cent. above its grant-related expenditure; in 1986-87 the figure increased to 3·9 per cent.; and for 1987-88 the overspend seems likely to increase still further to about 9 per cent. above GRE. An objective assessment for grant purposes of the various needs of the counties shows how Bedfordshire's needs are nothing like sufficient to warrant the high and rocketing expenditure of the present council.

My hon. Friends rightly drew attention to the implications of that for businesses. However, there is welcome news on the horizon. After the general election, in the first Session of the next Parliament, we shall introduce the community charge and the national non-domestic rate Bills. It will then no longer be possible for local authorities to fleece business ratepayers who do not have a vote or to impose substantial increases on them above the rate of inflation. We are pledged to limit national non-domestic rate increases each year to the rate of inflation and that will be included in the primary legislation. That means that in Bedfordshire there will be a reduction in the national non-domestic rate, if the substantial increase this year is taken into account. There will be the certainty that in future small businesses will not find themselves suddenly landed with a 20 per cent. increase in their overhead in one area. I sympathise enormously with the plight of all those people in Bedfordshire who are losing their jobs as a direct result of the council's actions.

I understand the problem at AC Delco. Indeed, I have a Delco plant in Southampton which, similarly, has been suffering from the effects of a Labour council and a hung county council, as rates have increased much faster than they should have done.

We recognise the problem of resource equalisation, which is a reason why my hon. Friends made representations to me. One effect of introducing the community charge will be to remove the resource equalisation problems. The community charge for a two-person household in Bedfordshire will be about equivalent to the present rate bill for a two-person household. That means that if a local authority wishes to increase its expenditure significantly above the rate of inflation the burden will fall directly on all adults in the area. We hope that that will lead to increased accountability and will concentrate the minds of electors to a greater extent than perhaps was the case two years ago.

As my hon. Friends said, although in 1977, before the Conservatives won control, the council had a record of high spending and extravagance of which people were well aware, seven or eight years later they had forgotten about it. Now they find that they must repent at leisure because it will be two years before they can oust the present council.

To sum up, Bedfordshire county council had a good settlement this year. If it had budgeted to increase its expenditure in line with inflation and finance the additional cost of the proposed teachers' pay deal, the precept increase could have been about 5 per cent., which is below the average county increase. Instead, the ratepayers of Bedfordshire are paying the highest increase of all the counties, and are paying for the alliance and Labour council's high-spending policies.

Greater London Council (Abolition)

12.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I see that the Under-Secretary is staying in his place to answer this debate. He is certainly earning his Easter egg this year. I am sure that he will not be congratulating me on the subject that I have raised as he congratulated his hon. Friends on the subject that they raised. However, I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the cost of the abolition of the GLC in financial and service terms.

I remind the House that the abolition of the GLC was a prime example of political vandalism by the Government, and arose out of the Prime Minister's paranoia. The abolition of the GLC owed nothing to political rationality, local government efficiency or the needs of Londoners. From the outset, it was about the Prime Minister's malice and her particular detestation of one Labour local authority which dared to oppose her.

Since 1983, I have faced a fair number of Department of Environment Ministers across the Floor of the House—the Department of the Environment is something of a political high risk area. No doubt all those Ministers hoped that, once the GLC had been safely abolished by the sheer weight of the Government's elected dictatorship, that would be the end of the matter. By scattering the pieces of the GLC around over 70 successor bodies, Ministers clearly hoped that they would be able to hide the impact of abolition.

To a certain limited extent, Ministers have been successful, given the fawning, pro-Tory press that we have, especially in London. *The London Evening Standard*—or the London sub-standard as it has become known—has failed completely to defend the interests and services of Londoners that the GLC used to maintain. I welcome the advent of the *London Daily News*, which is speaking up much more forcefully for Londoners.

As Ministers know, the embarrassing truth keeps bubbling to the surface—issues such as Hampstead heath, Thamesmead, seaside and country homes, GLC mortgages, the Woolwich ferry, London scientific services, the GLC lorry ban, the London research centre, road safety, traffic control, strategic planning, waste disposal, arts funding and the voluntary sector. In all these, there is daily evidence of the inefficiency, disruption and chaos that are becoming the reality of GLC abolition. London is muddling through, as we always knew it would, but the strains are clearly showing. I shall return to some of the issues—although I will not be able to deal with them in depth; there will be other opportunities to do so before this Parliament ends.

I start with costs. When the Government were finally pushed into saying how much they believed abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties would save in terms of staff and money, they came out with the figures of 7,000 savings in staff and £100 million savings in costs. I believe that those figures were simply plucked out of the air; the Government refused at the time, and have consistently refused since then, to give a more detailed breakdown of the figures.

A reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 18 December showed clearly that the 7,000 savings in staff had been reached by a rough subtraction of full-time staff in position in local authorities in June 1986 from those in position in June 1985. A figure of 1,100 was allowed for staff transferring to other bodies on abolition.

Will the Minister provide a breakdown of those 1,100 jobs and tell us how many were in London? Did that figure take into account staff transferring to, or recruited by, the Thames water authority, English Heritage, Government Departments, London housing units, the London strategic policy unit, the London waste regulation authority, waste disposal authorities and coroners and magistrates committees? We need that breakdown so we can test the Government's estimates.

The figure of £100 million of savings was given in 1984 and has never been revised; nor has it been analysed by Ministers, despite frequent requests that it should be. The figure has been reduced to £40 million for the first year, because of the impact of redundancy payments. Will the Minister tell us the amount paid in redundancy in the first 12 months, how many claims are outstanding and how much is involved?

The Association of London Authorities and the London strategic policy unit recently issued a document in which they calculated that the total cost of running services that used to be provided by the GLC is £178 million more than it was in the last year of the GLC's existence. They calculate that those services cost £1,011 million, compared with £833 million under the GLC.

I believe that the Government are dressing up the statistics to try to give respectability to their case. It is an example of the creative accounting which the Government spend so much time condemning Labour local authorities for using. Of course, those authorities have better reasons for their action, because they are trying to defend jobs and services in areas facing Government penalties and constant attacks.

I do not want—and I am sure that no one in London wants—a sterile exchange of conflicting figures between Labour local authorities and the Government. Therefore, in the interests of London, fair debate and political objectivity, I challenge the Minister to commission an independent audit to assess the financial impact of the abolition of the GLC. I will accept any auditors that the Minister proposes—except, of course, any of those connected with the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best).

I now wish to develop some of the issues that I mentioned earlier. It is well known that the preferred option for Hampstead heath would be for the London borough of Camden to run it. For a start, 84 per cent. of the heath is within the borough's boundaries, but Camden is a Labour borough and the Government and their creature, the London residuary body, do not want to transfer the heath to a London borough unless it is prepared to pay the full cost of running it. That would be grossly unfair, because Hampstead heath belongs to London as a whole.

I understand that the latest proposal, which surfaced last month, is for the City to administer the heath, with £1 million of City cash and £800,000 which is to be raised from a £15 million trust fund set up by the London residuary body. If that proposal goes through, London boroughs will lose £15 million of capital receipts.

Does the Minister think that a return of £800,000 on a £15 million trust fund is value for money? If he handed the £15 million to me, I could raise more than £800,000 on it. However, the Government will accept the proposal

[Mr. Tony Banks]

because they would like to see the City take over Hampstead heath, even though it would be financially and politically unacceptable to the London Labour boroughs.

I have mentioned previously the 3,400 seaside and country homes built by the London county council and the GLC for retired Londoners. The situation is still one great mess. We had a debate on the London residuary body in December, when I asked the Minister what would happen to the seaside and country homes. He replied:

"I hope that satisfactory arrangements will shortly be concluded for the future of those homes." — [*Official Report*, 19 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. 1523.]

When will the transfer from the LRB be effected? What new housing associations will be involved in taking over the homes, now that the deal with the Anchor housing association has come to a halt? The Minister must tell me, and, more important, the 3,400 tenants, what will be the average rent rises for those homes.

Will the homes still be available for Londoners after they have been split up amongst a plethora of housing associations? Will the Minister allow any of those homes to be sold off? As a large number of housing associations will be involved, what mechanism will the Department of the Environment use to make sure that those homes are still allocated to retired Londoners? When will all this be completed? That is what we need to know.

I do not want the Minister to do as he did on 19 December, and say that I am spreading alarm and despondency among the people in those homes. The Government started the whole business with the abolition of the GLC and they are responsible for those peoples' fears and worries. It is up to them to allay those fears by making an early announcement.

Thamesmead is another fine mess for London. It was to be transferred by the last Under-Secretary but one—or two, I do not remember exactly—who said that the transfer would be effected in a few days. Now, the Government have been forced to direct the London residuary body to dispose of Thamesmead at a price below the market rate—and, I hear, on hire purchase. I believe that the Thamesmead trust will have to sell off some 3,600 homes with vacant possession over the next 12 years to pay off the debt. That will change the whole nature of Thamesmead. Rents will rocket during the next few years and tenants will effectively be forced out of Thamesmead in order to make way for vacant possession sales.

I come now to the London waste regulation authority. Abolition of the GLC split up London's waste disposal arrangements by creating for statutory waste disposal authorities — three voluntary groups, plus Bexley in Kent. What a mess! It is, perhaps, appropriate to leave a mess to try to clear up London's mess, but it is an awful mess and the Government know that. All the experts told Ministers at the time that the GLC operated one of the world's most efficient waste disposal systems, but, as that meant keeping a Londonwide body in existence, the Government would not wear it. Therefore, we have this terrible mixture of authorities to run waste disposal in London. The health and safety of Londoners is now being put at risk merely because of political dogma emanating from the Prime Minister and working down to junior Ministers.

There are in London more than 1,000 known producers of special waste and the work that the London waste regulation authority is doing prevents it from giving full inspection cover to those known waste producing concerns. I have mentioned only known producers, but up to 20,000 tonnes of waste are illegally dumped in London each year. As many as 4,000 of those tonnes are special waste.

The situation is getting out of control. The director of the LWRA said that the authority could no longer manage the job. The failure to agree an increase in staffing at the LWRA now means that Londoners are being exposed to risks from toxic—perhaps lethal—substances, which are being illegally dumped in the Greater London area.

I am rushing to try to get through my speech in the few minutes left to me. I shall deal quickly with the voluntary sector. If I can catch the Minister's eye, I should like to show him a copy of the book, "After Abolition", and ask him whether he has seen it. It was published in January by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the London Voluntary Service Council. I intend to seek a debate on some future occasion to raise the whole matter of the voluntary sector in London and the impact that abolition has had on it.

The book lists 46 voluntary organisations that are known to have closed in London since abolition, a further 21 that are about to close and 120 that are facing eviction or increased rents on properties that now belong to the London residuary body. A new round of cuts has just been agreed under the London boroughs grant scheme. That was done a couple of nights ago. The cuts were imposed by the Tories with the support, on this occasion, of the Liberals. The Secretary of State has imposed a budget following the boroughs' failure to agree one after seven attempts. The position of the voluntary sector in London can only worsen as the Government steadily reduce the funds available.

An important feature of the voluntary sector is the arts. I know that the Minister is not primarily responsible for them, but there are impacts on the arts in London that arise from the abolition of the GLC. It has been discovered by those who operate the grants scheme for the London boroughs that the greatest demands come from arts organisations in London. One of the major demands that they are making upon the scheme is for the provision of capital resources. Unfortunately, the scheme is not permitted to provide capital grants. I understand that permission has been sought from the Secretary of State and that the Government have refused to grant it. I hope that the Minister will tell us why the Government have taken that approach and whether he is reconsidering the matter.

It is worth noting the effect on London when Liberals assume some control. Tower Hamlets has suffered badly as a result of the GLC's abolition, and it has now been decided by the Liberal council to cut the funding of arts clients from £228,400 to £7,400. That is what the Liberals do when they gain control of a London borough. This cut of 97 per cent. leaves 14 of 17 arts clients without any funding, including such well-known organisations as the Half Moon theatre, Camerawork and the East London African Arts Group. This is not directly the Government responsibility — responsibility rests with the Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets council—but the council will say with some justification that the position has arisen because of the GLC's abolition, rate capping and all the other onslaughts that the Government have been making on local authorities in the capital.

The Government have sought to hide the impact of the GLC's abolition behind a welter of uprovable statistics which they refuse to detail in any way that will make them meaningful to us. They have set up a host of quangos and joint boards — which, together with the borough councils, have responsibility for trying to clear up the mess that has followed the GLC's abolition. All the time, the Government are steadily reducing the central Government funding that has been used to lessen the financial impact of abolition. As things drift from bad to worse, the Government hide behind the various quangos and successor bodies and say, "This is nothing to do with us. This is a matter for the successor bodies."

This will be one of the last occasions on which I shall have to raise these matters. Before long, there will be a general election and the Government will be out of office. The GLC will be brought back, and I believe that all London will rejoice.

12.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I noted that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) did not make his final remarks with much conviction. I have read in today's edition of *The London Daily News*—I do not hold prejudices against one newspaper like the hon. Gentleman; I read all newspapers—that the former and unlamented leader of the GLC is now in Australia. I think that there are many who hope that he will stay there. Apparently he has been promoted in Australia as the Lord Mayor of London. He has been talking to the people there about the inadequacies of post-GLC London. Even *The London Daily News* admits that the Australian public are somewhat mystified.

Even more oddly, Mr. Livingstone is talking about giving a lecture to a conference on the role of local government in sustaining urban renewal. Where urban renewal in London has been practised efficiently and well, Conservative-controlled authorities have been responsible. Since the transfer of housing responsibilities from the GLC to the boroughs, the quality of life in responsible, Conservative-controlled boroughs for tenants of houses and flats has increased immeasurably.

It is something of a seasonal ritual to have a debate on the abolition of the GLC. As memories become more cloudy and people become less concerned about the GLC, so the arguments become more jaded. The fact is that the GLC has been abolished and no one wishes to resurrect it in its old form. I understand that the Labour party has put forward a proposal for a revamped regional authority for London. The principal plank of that proposal is to allow the services that were transferred to the boroughs —to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West and the Labour party objected — to stay with the boroughs. That is the wish of London boroughs, whether under Conservative control or under Labour control.

The hon. Gentleman made much play of suggesting that the GLC's abolition has led to increased costs. The facts say otherwise. Abolition has, emphatically, led to savings. In measuring those savings, it is important to distinguish between those that arise directly as a result of abolition, such as the initial savings in posts, and those that can be realised or thrown away according to the policy decisions of individual borough councils. I have not studied the ALA report in depth. I often think of the initials "ALA" as meaning the Association of Labour Authorities, but I am told that it means the Association of London Authorities. But, of course, they are all Labour authorities and have a particular axe to grind. The ALA was extremely reluctant to send the Department of the Environment a copy of the report. I cannot understand why.

Mr. Tony Banks: Perhaps the Minister will accept an Easter present from me afterwards. He can have my copy.

Mr. Chope: If the hon. Gentleman is going to offer me his marked copy of the ALA report, I should be delighted to receive it.

At first sight, the arguments are convoluted and based on sweeping assumptions. The report fails in any way to controvert the simple facts that more than 6,000 posts were saved immediately on abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils, with clear prospects of long-run annual savings of £100 million, and that significant financial resources have been released, notably in the form of some £431 million in cash now being distributed to successor authorities by the residuary bodies. The report attempts to compare expenditure by boroughs on services inherited from the GLC. It does not, however, reflect profligate spending by those boroughs that have chosen to pursue the GLC's spendthrift polices without a thought for possible savings.

On the first anniversary of the transfer to Wandsworth council of services that it had inherited from the GLC, I had the privilege to be invited to Wandsworth and to her how matters have progressed in that borough. Wandsworth council has reckoned that it has saved a substantial amount of money as a result of taking over services formerly run by the GLC and running them more efficiently. Would that that had been the attitude of all authorities that have taken over those inherited services.

Wandsworth council estimates that there was an initial reduction of £1·5 million in the running costs of the directly transferred services and that the repayment of balances from the London residuary body provided £2·7 million. The council said that those two savings equated to an 11·2p rate when Government grant entitlement on the money was added. Further savings amounting to a 2·8p rate have been generated for the current year via a reduction in the LRB and Western Riverside waste authority levies and a further 4·4p in LRB balances which have been distributed.

To those total savings of 18·45p, or £46·12, for the average ratepayer must be added further savings in 1987-88. Major new savings which are starting are the £99,000 a year on scientific services and £104,000 a year from London Research. With other savings immediately in prospect, the leader of the council reports that he envisages total savings of almost £50 for the average Wandsworth ratepayer. That would be equivalent to 17 per cent. extra on rate bills if the GLC were still in being.

Those are the facts that have been given by the leader of just one local authority. Those people who live in the vicinity of Battersea park can see how the park is now run much more efficiently and in accordance with the wishes of local residents. Seeing is believing.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West will never accept that the GLC should have been abolished, if, indeed, he accepts that it has been abolished. Therefore, it is worth reminding everybody about the substantial savings that there have been. I shall summarise the five main categories of savings that have come from abolition.

[Mr. Chope]

In manpower, in excess of 6,000 posts were saved immediately. We predicted 7,000 posts in the long run and I am confident that that will be achieved as residuary bodies wind down their remaining activities. A total of 7,000 posts equates to a £100 million saving to ratepayers every year and about half of that is in London.

Secondly, there are savings in financial resources. Abolished councils had locked up vast amounts of ratepayers' money and that is now being released. In London, the London residuary body is distributing to the boroughs in its first two years £129 million in revenue balances, £141 million in capital receipts and £634 million in capital spending power. The cash distributed amounts to around £100 for every household in London. There is more to come as the residuary bodies sell off additional surplus land and property.

Thirdly, on the matter of land and property, one of the residuary bodies' principal tasks has been to sort out the property portfolio. It is clear that the GLC and metropolitan county councils were hoarders of property on a grand scale. The Government are encouraging residuary bodies to sell as much of the surplus as they can. The proceeds of those sales will be returned to the ratepayers of the abolished councils. The estimate by the residuary bodies is that by the end of the year, they will have generated some £300 million of capital receipts, mainly from the sale of surplus property. In the first year alone, the LRB has sold property worth over £30 million. Capital receipts are being generated, to the benefit of boroughs and their ratepayers.

The fourth major saving from abolition is the success in devolving functions. The chaos and disruption predicted by some has been conspicuous by its absence. The boroughs have absorbed their additional functions with barely a ripple. The new joint authorities, representing the boroughs, are working satisfactorily. Roads are still maintained and fire engines still turn out. That should bring benefits from leaner operation and avoidance of duplication. It is up to the successor authorities to grasp the opportunities that have been offered to them as a result of abolition.

Accountability to the electorate has also increased, because services have been brought closer to the people.

Mr. Tony Banks: In view of this enormous success story why will the Government not submit it to independent audit?

Mr. Chope: The figures on manpower savings, for example, are obtained from "Joint Manpower Watch", which are submissions by local authorities to the Department of the Environment. The figures for additional staff are provided by the boroughs themselves under section 56 of the Local Government Act 1985 and the figures for compensation payments are provided by the residuary bodies. Obviously, all those figures for the individual authorities are subject to the audit of those authorities. Certainly, if the hon. Gentleman would like, I am prepared to suggest that the document of the Association of London Authorities should be discussed by people to see the extent to which it represents a fair picture of post-abolition London. The hon. Gentleman's selective quotation from what has happened, fairly convinces me that it is a travesty of the truth.

Before I gave way, I was going to refer to the fifth major area of success following abolition — the effect on services. It is emphatically for successor authorities to decide how they wish to run inherited services and at what level. Some boroughs are doing so with only a minimum of additional resources and it is clear that some boroughs have chosen to seize upon the excuse of abolition to increase their staff even more than is necessary.

A prime example is the irrelevant London strategic policy unit, which I understand is referred to as the GLC in exile. That employs over 300 staff at a cost to the ratepayers of Camden and the other supporting boroughs of some £7 million annually. It is not a legitimate additional cost of abolition. It is a choice by those profligate authorities to increase the burden upon their ratepayers.

If one looks at what has happened in the responsible authorities, one can see the benefits that have flowed from abolition and the benefits that will continue to flow in the coming months. I expect that there will come a time when even the hon. Member for Newham, North-West will no longer lament the demise of the GLC.

Third-world Debt

1 pm

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): The timing of this debate could not be more significant, as this week the Paris Club initiative on Third-world debt is being discussed with the relevant committees of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

They are discussing a plan for rescheduling the debts of the financially ruined sub-Saharan African countries. I understand that that plan has the British Government's full backing. That backing recognises that, in practical terms, the problems of the sub-Saharan African countries should no longer simply be left to the comforting words of the missionary whose vocation has often been to alleviate the suppression and depression of an often hungry people. Those people have experienced a deterioration in their standards of living while their Governments pay obeisance at the twin altars of low commodity prices—aggravated by western protectionism — and the immense burden of debt servicing, the worldwide value of which stands at over $1 trillion.

During those discussions, I hope that full consideration will be given to the rescheduling of Government-to-Government debt to over 15 to 20 years or more. I hope that consideration will be given to further grace periods for repayment and substantially reduced interest rates. In my view, those considerations are critical to tackling the problems of Third-world debt, because so many African countries face a net outflow of capital in a period of unprecedented economic crisis. If those considerations are contained in the Government's initiative and the initiative resulting from the committee meetings of the IMF and the World Bank, nothing but good can come from it. It should receive the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The subject that the Paris Club is considering has also been a matter for considerable attention and consideration by the sub-committee of the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development. It has been considering Third-world debt and the management of that debt. It has been sitting for some six months and has considered a whole range of issues in great detail related to new initiatives for debt. I congratulate everyone who has been working on that committee for the report which I hope will be published on 5 May and which will, I hope, make a major contribution to this subject.

The report concentrates, in part, on the problems of the sub-Saharan African debt which in 1985, was estimated by the World Bank to be $85·6 billion, of which $65 billion is public or publicly guaranteed. This debt burden required an outward debt service equivalent to 35 per cent. of exports. For some countries, the burden has been impossibly high. In 1984 it represented 146 per cent. of exports in the case of Somalia and 96·4 per cent. for Sudan. That figure is projected to rise to 151 per cent. in 1986-87. In the absence of economic growth, the figure of 96·4 per cent. represents a significant loss to the country. In 1985, imports were already well below the 1980 levels. Several countries similar to Sudan effectively defaulted long ago.

The debt burden has a dramatic impact on the countries in terms of their growth and their economic and political stability. It is vital that we tackle this problem. It is a crisis that affects us all and a crisis for which we are all responsible and for which we all hold a responsibility to find a solution. Unless we tackle the debt problem faced by these countries we cannot hope to solve the central political problems that they face, the appalling poverty levels and the famine conditions many have experienced in recent years. Regrettably, they will be matters for the future and will be experienced on a far larger scale than we have seen to date.

I hope that a number of important additional features will be considered by the Government regarding sub-Saharan Africa—they have already been considered by the all-party parliamentary group. Not only are official creditors dominant, but often over 50 per cent. of long-term debt is owed to the IMF and the World Bank alone. The World Bank International Development Association credits are made on soft terms but they cannot, at present, be rescheduled. As a result, African debtors have less flexibility than their Latin American counterparts. I hope that that will be considered. By 1985, the African debtors were not only suffering a virtual suspension of new bank lending, but also a collapse of IMF net inflows—from more than $1 billion in 1981-83 to $118 million in 1985, with several countries in arrears.

As a result, Governments often have to raise private bank loans at high rates of interest to pay off the IMF arrears, start new reform programmes and gain access to fresh development finance. The social consequences of such austerity are clear. First and foremost, austerity and stabilisation programmes, applied anywhere in the world, which they have to service the debt, have led to recessive characteristics in respective economies, characteristics that add to the poverty and to the problems that sub-Saharan Africa has had to face.

However, even the Paris Club public debt reschedulings that have occurred have been far from the ideal solution. Short-term reschedulings, which have to be repeated year after year—there have been 65 by 18 countries up to 1986—or which collapse as a result of being tied to IMF performance criteria, show a need for a new approach if fresh bunching is not to occur in the late 1980s.

Many African Governments, including those faced with famine in 1984-85, have responded to international pressures to embark on reforms, even in politically sensitive areas of economic management such as privatisation, the introduction of incentive schemes, devaluation and the abolition of subsidies. They have done more than simply pursue policies of budgetary restraint, although that has also been necessary.

Exchange rates have moved to more realistic levels and producer prices to farmers have been raised to stimulate export crops and domestic food output, to the extent that many countries are now having to manage food surpluses. In return, however, Africa has not enjoyed the promised upturn in prices and world demand for the commodities on which it remains dependent for growth, nor have tighter fiscal and monetary policies ushered in the return of voluntary bank lending and foreign investment.

That is the view of the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development. I hope very much that the Minister will find agreement with that view and that the Government will continue to take new initiatives to tackle the sub-Saharan countries' debt problems, and not regard it as a matter of precedent that should be avoided on the grounds that it will have repercussive effects on Latin America. The problem should be looked at in isolation, on

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

a case-by-case basis, to assess how best to handle the extremely difficult problems posed by the international debt crisis.

Government innovatory interventions are particularly necessary for the poorer countries. New funds from the commercial banks are not likely at present, so national creditworthiness is unlikely to suffer significantly from official debt write-offs. In many cases, Sudan being the most extreme, there is some frank admission that the debt outstanding can never be paid off and that continued attempts to service it are undermining recovery. Solutions to the low-income countries' problems will necessarily differ from those of stronger debtors such as Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. To that extent, it is important to endorse the case-by-case approach that I mentioned, which the main creditors have at last adopted.

Low-income sub-Saharan countries tend to owe the buld of their debt to official creditors, so there is greater opportunity for Governments to play a part. Although some are now in serious arrears, those forms of debt have not traditionally been eligible for rescheduling. As a result, African solutions have focused on increasing concessional bilateral and multilateral aid flows, except for the handful of countries that borrowed heavily from the banks.

I hope that due consideration will be given to the need to look at rescheduling and to extend the important work that this country has done and the initiative that it has taken through the Overseas Development Administration in appropriate write-offs on a case-by-case basis, which have been necessary and which I believe have signalled to the world community the importance of extending that initiative in the admirable way that the Government have done to date. Each country's financial problems are different, so there are bound to be different financial solutions, not just for the big Latin American debtors, but for the poorer countries, especially those in Africa the debts of which are owed not mainly to banks but to Governments and international institutions. All share responsibility for the crisis of the debt problems facing the Third World.

The central paradox faced by many of those poorer countries is that developing countries are now paying back to their creditors more in interest on the principal than they receive in new loans. Countries that are already very poor are suffering. Imports are being curtailed and world recovery — not just that of developing countries — is being undermined. The largest debtors are in Latin America. However, the debt burden is intractable for many of the poorer African countries upon which I am concentrating in this part of my speech. Their debt is mainly owed to Governments and multilateral organisation rather than to banks, as in the case of the majority of Latin American debt. In many cases, it is a struggle for those African countries even to pay the interest.

An innovative approach is required that will extend beyond narrow financial solutions and share the burden of adjustment between the debtor countries, banks and the creditor Governments. Debt has ceased to be purely a banking problem and now requires a political solution. With firm political will, the Government could again lead an international initiative to provide debt relief. I understand that the discussions currently being held in Washington show that that is possible. I am delighted also to learn—and I hope that we will hear more about this from the Minister—that the British are taking a very important lead in tackling the kind of political and practical solutions to the problems of managing Third-world debt.

I want to consider a subject that has taxed the minds of a number of hon. Members and Ministers and express gratitude to the civil servants who have spent many hours considering a specific concept upon which I think we should concentrate—debt development swaps. I do not want to lead further down the technical road on which we have already embarked in correspondence and in the House. However, I want to place on record the concept of debt development swaps, not only within the Bolivian context which I have particularly pursued, of linking the debt problems faced by Bolivia with, I hope, an imaginative solution to tackle its drug problem through the triennial narcotics programme which seeks to eliminate all cocaine from Bolivia within three years.

I want to describe the concept of debt development swaps. A country whose commercial debt is already heavily discounted can negotiate with a donor agency to trade debt relief for an agreed development programme. The example I have used is Bolivia, whose outstanding debt of 2·5 billion—of which $800 million is owed to commercial banks — is today trading on the London secondary market at 8 per cent. of its nominal value. The banks holding that debt have already made provision for substantial losses and could be persuaded to sell the $800 million debt for around $80 million if there were a willing Government purchaser or group of Government purchasers.

A donor Government or several donor Governments who already want to spend $80 million on an aid programme inside Bolivia could thus purchase the debt at a deep discount, while, to implement the domestic aid spending—in this case, the drug eradication programme in Bolivia—the Bolivian Government would simply have to raise $80 million-worth of local currency through taxation or other means. Commercial creditors would receive hard currency in redemption of the debts that they hold at or above the market rate. The donor Governments would have to raise no new money to fund the development programme, as, hopefully, plans will have been made in advance.

Although that may not necessarily be completely accurate with regard to Bolivia — I urge Ministers to increase spending programmes on drug initiatives in Bolivia—the principle could be established where we are financing development programmes in advance and using the debt development swap and the purchase of secondary market debt as a financial mechanism.

In other circumstances, part or all of a country's commercial debt could be brought back in that way and agreed development programmes could be a target for counterpart spending. My hon. Friend the Minister is aware that I am keen to see the Government take an initiative on this matter. Even if there are difficulties over its implementation in a specific programme such as drug eradication in Bolivia, I hope that due consideration can be given to using the secondary market in debt to a far greater extent than we have to date as Governments for the funding of development programmes.

There is clearly a large and growing market for secondary market debt in less developed countries. I have before me a recent document that shows debt trading in a whole range of countries. It reveals commercial debts

from Honduras at an indicated bid price of 40, while the Dominican Republic is at 45. There is an indicated bid price to Bolivia at 8 with Rumania at 88, Turkey at 97 and the Ivory Coast at 76 cents to the dollar. I am glad that the Government seem to be supporting the initiative.

On 29 January, I asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he agreed

"that the existence of a discounted secondary market in debt offers substantial opportunities for the Government to use this financial mechanism to fund developing countries' programmes."

I was delighted when he replied:

"My hon. Friend is right. The debt problem is still a very serious one, which all the major countries are addressing. A number of methods such as those that he has suggested need to be brought into play."—[*Official Report*, 29 January 1987; Vol. 109, c. 481.]

I hope that the initiative will lead to further consideration of this financial mechanism for funding development programmes, and that on 5 May serious attention will be given in the House and in the country to the new report on managing Third-world debt which will be published by the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development. I have read the report in draft, and I believe that it will make a significant contribution to the debate on overseas development not only in the House but internationally.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues will study the report in depth and will respond positively and publicly. I hope that they recognise that, together, we can consider new initiatives, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor did this week in Washington, and move forward to tackle the problem of Third-world debt, which is central to the future of any development programme in any developing country which suffers under the overhang of outstanding debt.

1.16 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on obtaining another debate on this important issue. I was interested to have confirmation from him that the report from the working party on debt of the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development will be published in less than a month, and I shall study carefully its comments, which he has foreshadowed today.

As my hon. Friend said, it is especially appropriate this week, when international economic issues are being discussed in Washington, to debate this subject in the House. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has launched his new proposal for the debtor countries of sub-Saharan Africa. I am glad to have the opportunity to give the House more information about that important initiative. We have set the process in train. It will be carried forward with other creditor nations in the Paris Club and elsewhere, and I am glad to say that some have already responded sympathetically.

Let us consider the debt problem more generally. Since the crisis of 1982, the policy has been to provide financial support to debtor countries in return for their adopting policy reforms. That was given additional impetus at Seoul in 1985 with the Baker initiative. But our strategy since 1982 has been to consolidate several achievements. So far, those achievements are that many countries have adopted reform programmes; the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have expanded their role in supporting countries that adopt sustainable policies; and, since 1985, those two international institutions have been working much more closely together. That is a welcome development.

The banks, for their part, have strengthened their capital base and have increased their debt provisions, which are now at a more realistic level than they were. In the meantime, the world economy has continued to grow: since 1982, growth has averaged over 3 per cent. per annum, and inflation has fallen overall by about five points.

Although many developing countries suffered from the fall in commodity prices, including the price of oil, most have stood to benefit from faster growth of imports into OECD countries, and interest rates are now six points lower than in 1982. The United States dollar is down from the abnormally high levels of a while ago.

There should, however, be no delusions that the debt problem does not remain acute. In particular, the British Government have become increasingly concerned over the past year at the progressive weakening of IMF conditionality. We must insist that the fund management will always require adequate adjustment measures in its programmes, including adjustment on the supply side. Creditors in the Paris Club should likewise not reschedule debt repayments without firm assurances that adequate policies are in place.

My hon. Friend talked about debt development swaps and other related market aspects. I acknowledge the helpful role that market mechanisms can play in the debt strategy as a whole. Secondary markets in debt can allow claims to be spread more widely, and market prices can give useful indications of the progress that various debtors are making. Even where market transactions result only in the redistribution of fixed claims within the international banking system, those transactions are a useful channel through which individual banks can adjust their portfolios.

The Government wish to encourage the market process and the greater securitisation of debt, especially where it spreads risk outside the banking system where it is now concentrated. Although they are not a panacea—the Government support the development of market mechanisms for handling debt, especially the growing number of schemes involving the transformation by various routes of fixed debt into equity so that risks and rewards are shared between creditors and debtors.

From the debtor's point of view, debt buy-back schemes such as that envisaged for Bolivia, and debt-equity schemes, which exist in a number of countries, can reduce the amount of debt outstanding where it is repatriated or converted into equity at a discount. It is, of course, for individual banks to decide whether they wish to participate by selling their loans to developing countries. Some may not wish to do so for a variety of reasons connected with their overall banking relationships with the country or countries concerned, and that must be taken into account.

The adjustment process that many debtors must undertake can be helped enormously by adequate flows of private direct and portfolio investment, and a stemming of the flight of capital out of debtor countries. That requires those countries to adopt sensible economic policies: positive real interest rates, realistic exchange rates and sensible tax policies. Above all, if capital flows are to be encouraged, it makes no sense for either creditors or

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

debtors to maintain barriers that impede them. The British Government abolished all controls on such flows in 1979, and Britain is second only to the United States in its scale of direct investment in developing countries.

As for sub-Saharan Africa, what we are urging is essentially a reinforcement of the present strategy. First, there should be a strengthening of policy reform by debtor countries, supported by finance from creditors, the World Bank and the IMF. Secondly, industrial countries should maintain policies for sustainable growth and open markets. Thirdly, there should be support for the increasing development of market mechanisms.

Middle income debtors ought to have sufficient resources to enable them eventually to service their debt, once appropriate reform policies are firmly in place. However, there is one group of debtors for whom all this will clearly not be enough — the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Some of these countries have so few natural or human resources that they have no hope of servicing all their debt in the foreseeable future. These countries typically have a gross domestic product per head of below $350. Many of them have less than $200. We must recognise that they have a special problem.

My hon. Friend compared those countries with the countries of Latin America and pointed to the fact that solutions are not necessarily to be transferred from one group to the other. He was absolutely right to make that important point.

Governments can take the lead in helping those countries in Africa that I have described, particularly because most of their debt is official, whereas most of the debt of the middle income countries is owed to commercial banks. In putting forward our initiative, we are not the first to pick out sub-Saharan Africa for special treatment. The famine of two years ago again reminded us all of Africa's particular problems. The United Nations recognised this, with its special session on Africa in May 1986, and the World Bank has had its special facility for Africa.

Although I acknowledge the needs of those African countries, I must emphasise the need for their commitment to reform. Their problems have been caused, in part, by reliance on one or two commodities for export earnings, by weak administrative capacity and by the legacy of mistaken policies in agriculture, industry and urban subsidy. A growing number of these countries now recognise the need to adopt adequate policies for economic adjustment and to work closely with the IMF and the world Bank. Where the poorest and most heavily indebted countries of sub-Saharan Africa are prepared to adopt appropriate policy reform, all creditor Governments should, in their turn, be prepared together to offer a reduction in their debt service burden. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been making that proposal this week in Washington.

The proposal has three elements. The first is the conversion of aid loans to grants. Britain has almost completed this process for the poorest sub-Saharan countries. The second is the rescheduling of debt by the Paris Club on more generous terms, with longer grace and repayment periods. The third is the reduction of interest rates to several percentage points below commercial rates. The British Government would be prepared to consider funding interest relief in such a way as not to affect existing aid programmes to those countries.

A debt package along those lines would give the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa a better chance to get on the road to economic recovery. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said yesterday in the interim committee, that would provide them with some light at the end of the tunnel. There is now an urgent need for the richer countries of the world to recognise the plight of the poorest countries in Africa. Britain has already played a constructive role in converting aid loans to outright grants, an example that I hope will be more widely followed.

Now, with this new initiative for the sub-Saharan countries, the British Government are again taking the lead by putting forward a three-point plan to tackle the problem of the accumulating debt of those countries. In the poorest African countries, the point has been reached where any proposal that does not include a measure of relief from the relentless burden of debt servicing cannot be regarded as realistic. If such a scheme is to succeed, it goes without saying that the Governments of all the other creditor countries will have to do their share. Therefore, I hope that they will be prepared to consider our proposals seriously.

Rolls-Royce plc

1.30 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): It will be viewed with amazement, not only in Coventry but throughout the country and possibly even internationally, that a world-famous firm such as Rolls-Royce can be transferred from the public to the private sector, involving a transfer of about £1,300 million of public assets, with a mere 30 minutes of parliamentary debate.

This "piratisation" exercise—in reality, that is what it is—owes nothing to the Government's stated aims of increasing competition — Rolls-Royce has no British competitors—or of widening share ownership, especially given the terms and conditions for the flotation which were announced this week. Not that any widening will take place because, today, Rolls-Royce is owned by 55 million people, but in four weeks' time it will be owned by only a few thousand who will hold bits of paper and claim that they own that national asset.

Yesterday the Secretary of State for Defence asserted that I had no knowledge of, or constituency interest in, the defence of the 2,000 workers and their families at Westland, who face the dole as a result of his anouncement yesterday. I refute that because my job in this place is to try to defend, to the best of my ability, all workers facing the horror and iniquity of unemployment, through which I had to live for four years. Such a claim will not be made today because I fepresent directly many thousands of Rolls-Royce workers and their families who work in Coventry, and many who work for the 61 local firms in Coventry, Nuneaton and Exhall who rely on major orders from Rolls-Royce and who are suppliers for the two plants at Parkside and Anstey.

Certainly, at Parkside, the plant within my constituency of Coventry, South-East, there is overwhelming opposition to the privatisation.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement has even got the names and addresses of more than 80 per cent. of the shop floor manual workers who signed a petition opposing his allegation that most workers at Rolls-Royce relish its privatisation. Last Friday, 40,000 workers throughout the Rolls-Royce group took industrial action against this enforced sale, demonstrating with their feet their total opposition to the privatisation. That opposition runs wide and deep among the work force at Rolls-Royce.

Early in 1971 I was an apprentice attending the Rolls-Royce technical college at Filton in Bristol. Like many others, I was called in to be told of the collapse of the company. I witnessed the way in which, in 24 hours of parliamentary time, the then Tory Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) took Rolls-Royce into Government hands. That time scale, showing how quickly this place can operate to widen public ownership, is perhaps one lesson that I am prepared to absorb from that ex-Prime Minister.

When Rolls-Royce was last in private hands it collapsed because it could not stand the strain of escalating research and development costs. It went bankrupt because of shortages of funds. Huge amounts of public money have been pumped into the firm during the past 16 years. The work force has been forced to make enormous sacrifices, especially in terms of the 20,000 jobs that have been lost during the past four or five years. Now that the company is again making a profit and taxpayers are just beginning to get some of their money back, the Tory Government intend to plunge Rolls-Royce back into the doubt and uncertainty of private ownership. Such profits as there are will not now go to taxpayers who made it all possible but to the new speculators who hold the shares. There is doubt and uncertainty. The future for Rolls-Royce cannot be challenged.

This week we have seen the difficulties with the new engine development and the Airbus project—potentially a major blow to the company's prospects. Moreover, there is in existence an "ice cream and banking" document that projects possible future plant closures. Although Ministers in the House have brushed it aside as only a draft and written by a junior member of management, the company describes it as having been superseded. If one of those projected plant closures—East Kilbride and Parkside in Coventry have been mentioned — was Coventry, Parkside, 3,000 jobs could be lost because 2,500 work there directly and 600 work in the component suppliers.

A closure would mean the loss of £30 million worth of wages every year in the local economy. Even discounting the £10 million that finds its way to the Treasury each year, £20 million worth of purchasing power would be lost to Coventry. Therefore, a further 400 jobs could be at risk in shops and other businesses which rely on the trade of those who spend their wages from Rolls-Royce.

The skill base of the city could deteriorate and the costs to the Treasury in dole and supplementary benefit could be huge. Even putting that aside, a company memorandum to its senior executives says that they should not worry about another 1971 crash as

> "The institutions (clearing banks, insurance companies, merchant banks etc.) provide sophisticated recovery and rescue facilities"

which were not available in 1971. It is ominous that the company should even consider the implications of another collapse.

Such threats hang like the sword of Damocles over the workers in Coventry and other Rolls-Royce plants and their families. They have watched past piratisation exercises and seen new shareholders take the short-term view and maximise profits as quickly as possible. They have seen job cuts at British Telecom and Associated British ports. When we talk about Coventry and privatisation in this Chamber we are often told to consider the expansion of Jaguar and, yes, in recent months employment has increased there. However, I remind the House that next door to the Rolls-Royce Parkside site is the Coventry Climax site, which was privatised in 1981. Under private ownership 80 per cent. of the original 3,000 jobs vanished and the company collapsed in the latter part of 1986. I remind the House of the haemorrhage of jobs following privatisation of Self-Changing Gears and Alvis, both of which are ex-publicly owned companies.

Workers in Rolls-Royce and elsewhere have seen pay held back and even reduced in newly privatised companies. They have seen changes in and possibly raids on pension schemes, and worsening employment conditions. Those decisions have been taken largely by shareholders whose numbers rapidly dwindle following privatisaton as compression and concentration take place of the numbers who owned the original shares.

Despite Government assurances, and even private assurances given to me by members of the board of Rolls-Royce in recent weeks, those fears are real for Rolls-Royce workers. The RB211 engine primarily caused the collapse

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

of Rolls-Royce in 1971. Today there are problems with the V2 500 and the Superfan engine developments. Pratt and Whitney has recently taken over engineering control and direction of the V2 500 project. Superfan, with its $3 billion research and development costs, seems ominously near to travelling the same path as the RB211 in the late 1960s and early years of the 1970s.

The year 1971 was a tragedy and if the lessons of 1971 are not learned in the next three or four years of private ownership for all those who directly suffer job losses a repeat of history would be a farce.

Above the many other industries within the British economy, the aerospace industry needs long-term planning, not just because of the scale of research and development costs but because of the immensely long lead times—up to 20 years for the development of a project. It is axiomatic within the Labour movement that one cannot plan what one does not control and one does not control what one does not own.

It is my personal belief—I am one of a minority within the Labour party—supported by my union, TASS and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions since 1982, that that industry requires co-ordinated planning and structured decision-making and full public ownership. This is necessary to defend Rolls-Royce against privatisation as a manufacturer of engines within the aerospace industry. Further public ownership should be extended to aerospace, to avionics and back into British Airways.

If the sale is completed, workers in the Rolls-Royce plant face a future of insecurity and uncertainty. Rolls-Royce will be a prime target for asset-stripping. There are increasing plans within the United States for protectionist measures against Japan and Europe. There are pressures within the US economy—the effects of a newly elected Democratic Congress, the decline in the value of the dollar and the pressure on the two major competitors of Rolls-Royce, Pratt and Whitney and General Electric—to bring work in-house to save the jobs of American workers or even consciously to squeeze out their only mutual major competitor, Rolls-Royce, by action leading to a possible takeover or by elimination of that competitor.

As we move towards a new world recession in the next couple of years, it is inevitable that those pressures in the American economy will be exacerbated. The Minister is smiling, but he should consider one fact. In 1985, the 140 members of the International Air Transport Association made between them a total profit of only $100 million. That would not buy even one Boeing 747. Think what a new world recession, even in the Minister's economic terms, and the cyclical nature of the aerospace industry, would mean to the future order books of firms such as Rolls-Royce. Both of Rolls-Royce's competitors are twice its size, and both are parts of larger multinationals, with the facilities of cross-subsidisation to assist the campaign to attempt to squeeze out Rolls-Royce. General Electric's attitude to the Airbus project in the next three or four weeks will be an important pointer to that direction.

It will not be beyond the wit and wisdom of the Boeskys and Bests of this world to intervene in the sale that takes place in a month's time. I make it clear, not only to the work force and my constituents, that my position on the sale is equally strong whether the purchasers of Rolls-Royce shares are domestic or foreign. Speculation, because essentially that is what trading in shares is in that City casino down the road, is rarely a respecter of national boundaries. It goes in the direction of profit alone and will find ways round the Secretary of State's rules. Job security and the well-being of working people, their families and communities, both directly with the 40,000 Rolls-Royce workers and indirectly with the 160,000 workers in the major components suppliers, are of no concern to the accountants in New York, London or Tokyo.

Some 137 Labour Members of Parliament—significantly, not a single member of the so-called alliance—have signed early-day motion 85. On dozens of occasions, in lobbies organised by workers in the past 12 or 18 months, in business questions, in questions to the Department of Trade and Industry, demands have come from many Labour Members for a debate on this issue. This 30 minutes today is the only result of those demands, and that is because I had the luck to win a place in the ballot for this one minute to midnight affair.

Why have the Government been so afraid in recent months to use their own time to put the case for the privatisation of Rolls-Royce? Could it be because of the escalating problems with engine development, which they want to keep under wraps for the next four or five weeks so that potential purchasers of shares are not frightened off? Could it be that the Government are embarrassed at having to cancel £645 million of company debt to provide a sweetener for institutions and speculators to buy shares?

Once again, the Government are underpricing and selling cheaply a national public asset. They have already lost £1·5 billion through underpricing the sale of British Telecom, Jaguar and British Aerospace.

Coventry city council has borrowed money over the past 60 years to build houses, schools, and community centres and now owes over £200 million to the banks and financial institutions. All local authorities owe a total of about £30,000 million. If it is OK for this Tory Government to cancel £645 million of Rolls-Royce debt as a sweetener for privatisation, that will be a precedent when I call on the next Labour Government to cancel the debts of local authorities such as Coventry. Cancelling Coventry's debt, in the same way as the Government have cancelled the debts of Rolls-Royce and other privatised concerns., would release £25 million a year of debt interest charges which could halve all domestic rents and rates in the city and leave £10 million a year for the building of new houses and the repairs of existing houses. Coventry's housing crisis could be half-axed in the lifetime of a Parliament.

The whole sale stinks—from the debt cancellation to the refusal of the Rolls-Royce management, including the arch-proponent of privatisation, Sir Francis Tombs—who is not unconnected with the banks that will be profiting from the mechanics of the sale—to allow trade unions to discuss privatisation in work time, although videos and so on were used by the management to promote the sale.

The sale is a kickback by the Tories to those who support them financially at elections. It owes nothing to a genuine desire to promote the future of the industry and merely seeks to return it to the uncertainties of the anarchy of capitalism and private ownership.

I have no doubt that the debate will not stop the sale going ahead, but it gives me an opportunity to pledge to the workers and families in my constituency and to the workers in the whole of Rolls-Royce that under a future

Labour Government, I and other Labour Members will argue not only for the return of Rolls-Royce to public ownership, but for the co-ordinated planning of the aeroindustry, with wider public ownership of firms such as Westland and Lucas.

When workers own their industries and, through their traditional union organisation, have a majority say in the planning, development and control of those industries and when there is genuine control and management of publicly owned industries by the labour movement instead of by Sir Michael Edwardes, Sir Kenneth Keith, Sir Robert Reid and the others who have run those industries in the past, the jobs of aerospace workers will look a great deal safer than they do today—four weeks before the butchery of Rolls-Royce.

1.48 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): The title of the debate is the future of Rolls-Royce, and I welcome the positive nature of that title. As always, I greatly enjoyed listening to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

I would not say that the hon. Gentleman's speech was a trip down memory lane, because, alas, my memory does not stretch back that far, but I know from history books that the hon. Gentleman uses the sort of rhetoric that characterised the old, fire-eating style of Socialism in the days when there was real deprivation throughout the work force in industrial Britain. Those Socialists were responding to a real need and a situation in which there were many undesirable aspects.

Of course, the theme to which the hon. Gentleman—beside himself—could not resist returning, again and again, was the longed-for inevitability of world recession. He is longing for a recession. Extremists such as he cannot wait for a collapse of the system. They are indoctrinated to believe that it is inevitable and they recognise that unless it happens they will become more and more obsolete as political figures. That is because they are battling against a tide of rising living standards and aspirations. They are combating the growth of materialism, to coin a phrase. It is that growth that will consume them. The poor hon. Gentleman, much as I sympathise with his passion, is becoming obsolete and his inner knowledge of his fate is what makes his rhetoric so embittered. His speech was all pessimism and gloom; but in fact, the prospect is exceedingly bright.

Rolls-Royce has a special place in United Kingdom industry. It is a symbol of excellence, and a symbol of British excellence. The name itself has a unique place in our manufacturing tradition and is recognised the world over.

Rolls-Royce is not merely the proud possessor of a high place in the minds of our people: it is a company with a strong presence and a future that is full of opportunity. It competes extensively in world markets. Two hundred and seventy of the world's airlines use its engines, and 110 of the world's defence forces use them, too. It employs 42,000 people throughout the world and provides work for many more through its suppliers.

Rolls-Royce is also a profitable company. In 1984, it made pre-tax profits of £26 million, in 1985 it made £81 million and in 1986 it announced record profits of £120 million.

I cannot, of course, say what profits Rolls-Royce might make in the future. This week the Government have published the "pathfinder" or draft prospectus for the company's return to the private sector, and in view of that I must be careful not to say anything that might influence the potential investor, who must make up his or her mind on the basis of the prospectus. We have confidence in the management of the company and believe that Rolls-Royce is well placed for its return to the challenge of the private sector.

The hon. Gentleman made it clear that he did not believe in privatisation and that he would do his best to bring Rolls-Royce back into what he called Government control. He was a bit muddled on that point: half the time he talked about Government control and the other half he claimed that that control would mean that the company was owned by 55 million people. It would no more be owned by 55 million people than the workers in the Tupolev or the Mikoyan factories in the Soviet Union enjoy the facilities which, in an ideal sense, the hon. Gentleman was proclaiming should be the prerogative of the Rolls-Royce workers.

If Rolls-Royce is privatised, the Government will not continue to run it from Whitehall. When the management need to make an investment decision, they will not have to come to Whitehall for approval. I dare say that the hon. Gentleman believes that whenever the trade unions have a grievance they should be able to resolve it through a meeting with Ministers. I suppose that he is not convinced that Rolls-Royce should — or could — live in the international market place, in spite of the way in which its profits are increasing. If the company is to prosper, it must operate in international markets against international competition. It must offer competitive products at a competitive price. It must be as efficient in production as in competition. It must operate quickly and flexibly in reaction to the needs of the market.

Mr. Nellist: Who wrote this?

Mr. Clark: I shall allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene if he wishes. With which of my remarks does he disagree? Does he seriously believe that a company should always be shielded by inexhaustible recourse to taxpayers' money? It is that which causes companies to shrink. Does the hon. Gentleman seriously believe that no company, even one with such a great tradition and as proud an achievement as Rolls-Royce, can afford to be exposed to the draught of international competition?

Mr. Nellist: Does the tone and tenor of the past 30 seconds of the Minister's reply mean that, following privatisation, there will be no public money available to Rolls-Royce because it will then be exposed to the pressures of international competition and will have to stand on its own two feet? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Clark: Rolls-Royce is well able to stand on its own two feet, and has effectively been doing so for the past years. That is reflected in the enormous increase in its orders and the way in which its engines have spread across the world's airlines and defence forces, and in the increase in its profits over the past three years. It is for this reason that privatisation is so important. The company chairman, Sir Francis Tombs, said earlier this week,

"The Government's timescales and objectives are different from those of a long-term capital goods company."

So long as the company is owned by the Government, it will have another layer of decision making which cannot be helpful to it.

[Mr. Clark]

The hon. Gentleman has asked why we should take the risk of privatising Rolls-Royce and has suggested that the taxpayer should be allowed the benefit of his investment in the company. The taxpayer will be getting a return on his investment through the proceeds of the sale. If an individual taxpayer wishes to continue to invest in the company, there is an excellent opportunity for him to do so through the share offer. I cannot agree that we are taking extra risks through the privatisation. We are privatising the company because we believe that it will do better in the private sector than in the public sector. It is not immune from commercial risks, but nor would it be in the public sector.

The fact that a company is in public ownership has never been a guarantee of employment. Publicly owned concerns are not giant taxpayer-funded job-creation schemes. There have been a number of job losses in Rolls-Royce over the past few years as the company has improved its productivity. Public ownership has provided no security of job. It is only by competing effectively and increasing market share that companies can provide greater job security. I believe, therefore, that privatisation and not state ownership is in the best interests of employees. I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a diametrically opposite view, but had the Jaguar company been in his constituency, would he have argued — I suspect strongly that he would — fervently and repeatedly that privatisation would harm the company and the prospects of its employees?

Mr. Nellist: We have not seen the end result of privatisation. The Minister has mentioned the Jaguar company, which is very much dependent on the American export market. As the falling price of the dollar works its way through the system over the next few months, there will be interesting developments in the company's future. Jaguar, like Rolls-Royce, has had huge amounts of public money pumped into it, and despite the sacrifices that have been made by the work force in bringing the company back on its feet, the rewards are to be given to the speculators.

There is one difference between Jaguar and Rolls-Royce—I know something about the car that is made in Coventry, and I hope that when we next debate these matters the Department will find a Minister who knows his brief rather better than the Minister of Trade—and that is development costs. It costs only about £20 million to develop a new car while it costs about $3,000 million to develop a new aero engine.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman has raised matters that are for the company and not for Ministers and has ignored the fact that the company is no longer, as it was in 1971, based heavily on the performance of one engine. It is much more widely based now with a wide product range. It has the opportunity to develop on several fronts at once and to ride individual storms. The Government will continue to have an important and direct relationship in a number of ways with Rolls-Royce. The Ministry of Defence will undoubtedly remain a major customer, and both the Ministry of Defence and my Department will maintain a key interest in the company's research and development programmes and, no doubt, will continue to be involved directly with Rolls-Royce in those programmes. The partnership which we have enjoyed in recent years will still exist after privatisation.

Business Debts (Late Payment)

2 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): This is possibly the last debate before the election when I shall have an opportunity to raise this subject. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I have discussed this topic more than once. I am pleased that this time we are debating it at two o'clock in the afternoon rather than at 4.30 in the morning, as we did when we last had a chance to consider it.

We recognise that this serious problem of the late payment of debt affects a large number of people from a large number of areas. We recognise especially that industry has a serious problem. It manifests itself primarily as a cash flow problem. It is obvious that, if a firm cannot be paid, its cash flow is affected. Of the 22,000 bankruptcies last year, a substantial number—I cannot be precise—were due to cash flow problems rather than simply insolvency.

On Monday this week, Sir Charles Villiers, a former chief executive of the British Steel Corporation, said at a press conference organised by the Forum of Private Business that the two biggest problems that small firms have to encounter when considering their cash flow were taxation—primarily because of present legislation which requires quick payment—and the late payment of debts. He estimated that, of the 2,500 suppliers to British Steel during his stewardship, 500 went out of business simply because they were not able to get debts paid. He came up with a revealing statement, which is pertinent to the Government's code and guidelines on the late payment of debts. Knowing British business men as he does, he said that they will not change their attitudes to anything, let alone late payment of debts, until they are forced to do so.

I do not wish to be critical of the Government's code, but its weakness is that it is voluntary. It is a good code and I do not believe that any business man, lawyer or anyone involved in these matters can argue with any statement in it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced that the code will be revised, and I look forward to reading that revision. If I have one criticism, it is that there should be a recommended period for payment, whether it is 30 days or 60 days, or 30 days net or 60 days net. It would be useful if the revision included a recommended period for payment.

I am not convinced that a voluntary code will change the climate of opinion on late payments of debts. It is worth looking at what happened to the CBI pamphlet which was published in 1980, seven years ago, entitled "Payment of Bills—a guide to good practice". The CBI, in its recent report on the late payment of debt, had to admit that the pamphlet had little effect. I venture to suggest that it had no effect, and that the position has even deteriorated.

I am pleased to welcome two recent converts to the debate on the late payment of debts. The first is no less a person than the Archbishop of Canterbury. In an interview with *The Times*, he said that debt was a symptom of the decline in our personal morality. He said that he thought that the reason was the high technological era in which we live, which had changed the ways in which we communicated. There is something to be said for that. Debt collection has become an impersonal business. One no longer rings up the man with whom one is doing business and says, "How about sending me a cheque?" One often finds oneself talking to a computer or a recorded message. That is one of many factors involved in this area of debate.

The second convert who perhaps has more influence on this topic is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In my speech during the Budget debate I referred to this subject. The Chancellor said:

> "Perhaps the biggest problem faced by the small business man today is the trade customer who is late in paying his bills: so late sometimes that VAT becomes due before the bill has been paid. I can do nothing about late payment; but I can, I hope do something about the VAT problem."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 821.]

One could almost imagine that the first sentence had been drafted by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. It is a welcome statement and the measures introduced to help the small businessman were most welcome and, all in all, it was a good budget for small businesses, particularly with reference to the cash accounting for VAT.

However, it is slightly odd for the Chancellor to say that he could not do anything about late payment because that conflicts with the line coming from the Department of Employment, the guidelines of which clearly go towards the argument that one can do something about it. I do not think that it would publish guidelines if it did not believe that they would have some affect. We have to ask ourselves who is right; is it the Treasury or the Department of Employment? There is a clue to that, which will probably come as no surprise to my hon. Friend the Minister as I have suggested it in the past. It is worth noting that the Treasury has introduced penalties for the late payment of VAT. In reply to a written question that I put to the Chancellor, he confirmed that during the period October 1986 to January 1987 the VAT receipts went up by the staggering sum of £500 million. That was in contrast to the similar periods in the two years before where there had been no increase, but a steady contribution to the Treasury.

We understand that the backlog of VAT due to the Treasury will decline as a result of the introduction of penalties for late payment from £1 billion to £250 million. It is well on the way to collecting that backlog. Therefore, in a rather tortuous way I suggest that the Treasury supports the principle of some enforcement behind voluntary codes.

There has been a significant development this week in that Dun and Bradstreet, the world's largest credit collection agency, has published the interim results of a survey that it has embarked upon. The results make interesting reading. It asked what sort of problems people have in the area of late payment of debt. The answer was that 18 per cent. experienced severe problems, 78 per cent. experience some problems and 4 per cent. experienced no problems. Therefore, 96 per cent of those consulted had experienced problems on late payment of debt. The survey then asked those questioned whether they had read the guideines contained in the booklet "Payment on Time". A surprisingly high number, 19 per cent,—I congratulate the Department of Employment on getting through to 19 per cent.—said they had. However, 81 per cent. had not read it. More interestingly, the 19 per cent. who had read the booklet were then asked whether the booklet had made an impact, only 6 per cent. were able to answer "Yes". Therefore, 6 per cent. out of a total of 19 per cent. have been influenced by the guidelines. That is a figure of about

[Mr. Richard Ottaway]

1 per cent. That shows that 99 per cent. of businessmen in the country have not been influenced by the guidelines. One has onely to imagine oneself inside a finance directors office with a pile of bills and the Government's guidelines in one hand and an unhealthy bank balance in the other and ask what would he do. Would he be influenced by the guidelines and make his bank balance worse, or postpone payment for another month. I think that any businessman, as Sir Charles Villiers said, will not do anything unless he has to.

The fourth question put in the survey was whether those questioned supported any legislation in this area. A total of 73 per cent. said that they did and that they believed it should take the shape of interest on the late payment of debts. We have to ask ourselves whether legislation in this area is a good idea. We know that the Treasury believes that it is, for the reasons that I have already given.

It is important to bear in mind that legislation will not conflict with the Government's guidelines. Frankly, I believe that it will give those guidelines teeth. However, many arguments have been put forward against legislation and there has been a drift away from support for guidelines. Why is the introduction of such legislation criticised?

The first argument against such legislation is that it would be interventionist. Many of us on the Conservative Benches are against the nanny state and interventionist legislation, but I do not believe that this legislation represents intervention. It represents regulation of the market place. We have been down this avenue of discussion many times especially in this Parliament, in our discussions of the Financial Services Act 1986. It is important that the City and the general market place are properly regulated.

The second argument put forward against legislation is that it would be more widely used by big firms than small firms and would act to the detriment of the small firms that we are trying to help. Frankly, I do not accept that. If legislation is introduced, it is available to everyone. It is not specifically aimed at the small firm. I believe that if small firms found that they were being pushed by creditors, they would turn round and lean on their debtors. We must also remember that large firms operate trading conditions and credit checks.

Small debtors cannot be slow payers in today's modern industry. Big company suppliers insist upon three trade references and one bank reference before they start supplying goods. Lesser enforcement procedures may also be followed—for example, the utilty companies may cut off services to small firms. Small firms are especially labour-intensive, and small retailers buy for cash. I believe that the introduction of legislation will redress the balance in favour of small businesses rather than the other way.

The Forum of Private Business, in a survey carried out in January 1987, asked its members whether they were in favour of legislation. The results showed that 86 per cent. were in favour and 14 per cent. were against. Recently, the Forum went back to the 14 per cent. to ask why they had said no. Only 11 per cent. of those asked said that they feared they could go bankrupt. Therefore, 11 per cent. of the 14 per cent.—which is 1·5 per cent.—had a fear of bankruptcy. Therefore, I am not sure that it is a fear of bankruptcy that makes small firms so keen on this legislation.

We must also consider the self-employed, the small, one-man operator who is at the end of the line and who has no creditors, only debtors. It is worth noting that not one survey has been published showing a majority against legislation. The CBI survey showed that 44 per cent. of those questioned would use the legislation and 84 per cent. believed that it would result in the faster payment of bills. I believe that the introduction of legislation would result in a tremendous release of energy—we always serach for that in politics—and will result in a change in the climate in such matters.

The Government have not been unreasonable. The Minister has said that, if my colleagues and I can persuade him that industry wants a change from the guidelines and wants the introduction of some legislation to give those guidelines teeth, he will have an open mind on the topic. I thank the Minister for that positive approach.

Time is running on, but I have a list of trade and professional associations — some 25 supporters — in favour of a change in the Government's attitude to this matter. They are primarily in support of legislation. If I may pick out one or two of those associations they include the Road Haulage Association, the National Farmers Union, the Small Business Bureau, the Federation of Master Builders and the Chartered Institute of Transport. All those organisations have a substantial number of members. Indeed, some 300,000 businesses now support the concept of legislation to deal with this problem.

The other day, my hon. Friend the Minister said in a press release that, of the seven principal lobby groups, only one supported some change to the present law. I do not believe that that is strictly true. If we consider the seven principal looby groups, we can discern a pendulum swing of opinion on this matter.

The Institute of Directors remains against legislation. The Association of Independent Businesses has made no comment. The Union of Independent Companies said this week that it has the situation under review and may have to support legislation unless there is considerable improvement. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce is slightly muddled in its advice. It said that, if legislation is introduced, it will support it provided that it does not result in a change in what is already the law, so I am afraid that we cannot look too much at the association's advice. However, it is worth noting that the Bristol, Plymouth and Nottinghamshire chambers now support a change.

The National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses has begun to show a shift in opinion and is now calling for interest penalties in the county courts. The CBI is in favour of a discretionary change in the law and possibly reviewing the position. As we know, the Forum of Private Business is for legislation. I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister the report that it published this week.

An early day motion has also been tabled on the topic. It is not frivolous, like many that appear on the Order Paper. It now has the support of 183 Members of Parliament, representing 15 million people. One cannot ignore such a substantial number of Members who now believe that there should be a change in our approach.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his interest in this topic during the lifetime of this Parliament. I am pretty

sure that this is the last time that we shall have the chance to discuss it before the election. I shall be interested to hear what he says about it.

2.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): The late payment of business debts, which we are debating today, is in some respects an unusual subject. There is very wide agreement about the existence of the problem and the need to do something about it. At the same time, there is substantial disagreement about the best way of dealing with it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway) is convinced that further legislation is a necessary part of the solution, and I am not. I do not say, and never have said, that I am rigidly opposed to legislation, but my starting point is that we should not use legislation to dictate to firms, large and small, how they should do business with each other unless the advantages of legislation are quite clear. That point should be common ground to Conservative Members and even to many Opposition Members. As my hon. Friend supports legislation, it seems that he has satisfied himself that the advantages are clear. I must say to him, despite his closing remarks, that I do not believe that he has yet satisfied most of the principal representatives of small business in whose interest he makes his proposals.

I have close contacts with the organisations representing small firms and I have discussed the problem of late payment with them on many occasions. The great majority of them either are opposed to legislation or have serious reservations about its desirability. The National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, which certainly represents very small businesses, as my hon. Friend will concede, the Association of Independent Businesses, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the National Chamber of Trade and, I believe, the smaller firms council of the CBI, have all told the Department or me that they do not support legislation along the lines proposed by my hon. Friend.

For example, I should like to quote from a letter addressed to me by the chairman of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, Mr. Brian Prime, dated 6 March, in which he said:

"The Federation has always been reluctant and very cautious over this subject. I felt it was time to confirm our policy on this subject. With this point in mind, it was raised at our February National Council Meeting and after debate Council once more confirmed the Federation's opposition to legislation being introduced that would make interest on late payments of bills mandatory. We feel this would have a more detrimental effect on small business than a beneficial one."

Mr. Ottaway: May I refer my hon. Friend to the manifesto of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, published this week? On page 10 it says that the federation

"supports a strengthening of the County Courts system, enabling those bodies to impose discretionary interest penalties".

I agree that that is not exactly what I am saying, but a change in the law is needed to introduce that.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for stressing that. However, in a number of debates that we have had on this issue, the point has been missed that the Administration of Justice Act 1982 is already on the statute book. That allows discretionary payment to be awarded by the courts. That may have been missed from the Dun and Bradstreet survey to which my hon. Friend referred. I maintain—perhaps this is a weakness—that the Government have not made the nation increasingly aware of the fact that the Administration of Justice Act 1982 exists. Perhaps the vast majority of people are unaware of that.

I accept that the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses is asking for changes at the county courts level. No one disputes that. However, it is not prepared to follow the route down which my hon. Friend is seeking to lead it at this stage. He has referred to the Union of Independent Companies. This morning I spoke to the chairman of the Union of Independent Companies, Mr. Barry Baldwin. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that the union is keeping the matter under constant review. I understand that that statement was made by the vice-chairman. He said:

"It may have to support legislation unless the situation improves considerably."

The chairman volunteered the information to me that it was unlikely that the union would ever take that step, but he would certainly stand by something which my hon. Friend would welcome—the fact that the union would certainly keep the position under review.

I query this point not because I doubt anything that my hon. Friepd has said, because I know that he speaks with some authority on these matters. If we refer to the case put forward by the Forum of Private Business—for which I have a great deal of time and respect; I tend to agree with the vast majority of what it says—the forum claims at the back of its booklet to have the support of the Federation of Master Builders. It does not. I have a letter from Mr. Bill Hilton dated 5 February — relatively recently—which clearly makes the point:

"as you have previously maintained, there could be serious disadvantages arising from such legislation in the absence of certain safeguards. And when does payment become 'late'?"

I could quote from various letters that I have received only recently.

I am not prepared to take on the Archbishop of Canterbury; and my hon. Friend would not expect me to do that. However, if I take time out, as I am prepared to, to study what the Archbishop said——

Mr. Ottaway: What about the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Trippier: If my hon. Friend reads the case laid out by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech, he will discover that my right hon. Friend's case supports my position.

My hon. Friend was kind enough to say that at least I have kept the door open. I will refer to that later in my speech. However, to paraphrase my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, he said that he could do nothing about late payment. With the Administration of Justice Act 1982 and the code of practice, we have shown that we are doing all we possibly can to help. We are not prepared, however, to go as far at this stage as my hon. Friend has suggested.

Other organisations with a strong representation among small businesses, such as the Institute of Directors, have also expressed their concern and opposition, as has the Institute of Credit Management, whose members have practical experience of the problem. I am tempted to say that there is a consensus of informed opinion against my hon. Friend's proposals, but I recognise that they find a measure of support. It would be foolish to say otherwise.

[Mr. Trippier]

The Forum of Private Business in particular has campaigned vigorously for legislation in that area, and I accept that it is not without allies. I must congratulate the forum and my hon. Friend on their determination to bring this problem to the forefront of public attention where it belongs. At the same time, I hope that I have made it clear that their support for legislation remains in my view a minority opinion among those who have considered the problem in depth.

I have said publicly, and repeat again now, that I attach great value to the views of the organisations representing small businesses. If they were to give their firm backing to my hon. Friend's approach, I would take their views very seriously indeed. My hon. Friend referred to hon. Members who have signed the early-day motion. I respect that, but I find it hard to believe that, where the arguments have not been explained in some detail, hon. Members would wish to support a proposal that is opposed by the small firms lobby groups which represent the vast majority of people in the small firms constituency. Perhaps it would be wise if, after the debate, I sent them copies of *Hansard* reports of this and other debates on the matter.

Having stated where I disagree with my hon. Friend, I should emphasise the substantial areas of agreement. First, we agree that there is a serious problem. During my time as Minister responsible for small firms, few issues have struck me as forcibly as this. At the best of times, many small firms have cash flow problems, and late payment of bills by their customers makes a bad position worse. If the small firm is lucky enough to have a sympathetic bank manager, it may be able to borrow to help it through its difficulties, but the cost in interest charges and in the reduction of funds available for other purposes makes that a far from ideal solution. In addition to the financial strain, there is an extra burden on management time. Small business men already have enough roles to play without becoming debt collectors.

We agree that there is a problem. We also agree that, to solve the problem, above all we need a major change in attitudes and practices. Those who advocate legislation believe that it will have a helpful effect on attitudes and practices. Those who oppose it, or are sceptical about it, doubt whether it will be helpful. Some think it will be harmful. But there is general agreement that legislation will be useful only if it encourages a change in attitudes and practices. Merely to give the victims of late payment an additional means of redress will bring only a very marginal benefit if it does not have a much wider effect in deterring bad practices and encouraging good ones.

It is important that the problem of late payment should not be oversimplified. It is not, as is sometimes suggested, simply a matter of large firms deliberately delaying payment as a means of improving their cash flow and investment income at the expense of their smaller suppliers. Where that happens, it is, of course utterly deplorable. But there are other reasons for delay, bureaucratic inertia, cumbersome payment systems, and disputes over contract performance among them. Although I receive many complaints about late payment, relatively few of them are straightforward cases of unwillingness to pay on time. Often there is a dispute about the quantity or quality of goods supplied. In other cases, the complaint is about the terms of contract themselves, where one party considers the payment clauses unreasonable. I am bound to be influenced by this experience in forming my views on legislation, which seems to offer a simple solution to what is often a complex problem.

I must also emphasise that a change in attitudes and practices is needed among small firms. At least part of their problem is often due to lack of thought at the stage of contract or invoicing, or to inadequate systems of credit control. If the contract or the invoice does not make it clear when payment is required, it is not surprising if payment takes longer than the supplier would like.

The public sector, too, has come in for some criticism. But if I refer to the fairly recent CBI survey, I gain some comfort from the knowledge that only 5 per cent. of respondents felt that central and local government bodies are the worst payers. That does not mean that there is any room for complacency. Far from it. It is important that I stress yet again in public that I am willing to take up cases of late payment involving Government Departments. I am pleased to say that my intervention has often been effective.

So much for the nature of the problem. What can the Government do to help towards a solution? I am glad that the title for our debate refers to the Government's guidance, because we have indeed given guidance. Last year, in conjunction with the CBI, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Institute of Directors and the Institute of Purchasing and Supply, my Department issued the booklet "Payment on Time". The booklet has been much in demand, with 150,000 copies distributed, and requests for more copies continue to arrive. I am not discouraged by surveys purporting to show that the booklet has had no impact. I know, for instance, that a Dun and Bradstreet survey has found that only 19 per cent. of those surveyed had read the booklet. By the standards of most Government advice booklets, I suspect that that makes it a best seller. My estimate of the size of the small business constituency is more than 4 million. One fifth of that would mean that about 800,000 copies of my code have found their way into the hands of small business men. As only 150,000 have been made available, someone else must be printing them. I only hope that it is a small firm, but I should like to know who is paying.

I recognise that the code is not the end of the story, but my hon. Friend has been kind enough to refer to the new initiative that I announced this week, which will update the code and print some of the replies that I have received from the chairmen of the larger companies.

Strange though it may seem, I welcome the opportunity that we have had to debate the issue again; I welcome any initiatives that keep the issue in the spotlight. The need for improvements is not in dispute. However, there is room for general disagreement about how to achieve them, and I still believe that co-operation is better than coercion.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Crown Land (Gillingham)

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am very pleased to have the second opportunity in four months to discuss the conservation of the environment in my constituency. I am particularly pleased to have a chance of bringing up to date my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on the matters that we discussed during my Consolidated Fund debate at 3 am on Tuesday 16 December last year. I am mindful that my hon. Friend has already had to respond to two debates today, and I hope that I shall not test him too much.

In that Consolidated Fund debate, we discussed the proposed sale of 48 acres of redundant but undeveloped land in the tenure of the Ministry of Defence known as the Great Lines, Brompton, Gillingham. This afternoon I shall try to widen the scope of my remarks to include other redundant Crown land in Gillingham. I shall try not to repeat my earlier comments, although the Great Lines remains the most contentious area of land as yet undeveloped in the ownership of the Crown and likely to be sold by the Property Services Agency, acting as the Government's estate agent.

Since my hon. Friend and I last discussed the Great Lines, the attitudes of both Gillingham borough council and the PSA have hardened. The council has yet to determine the PSA's over-ambitious planning application for the residential development of 14 acres of the Great Lines, because it has been awaiting a promised amended application from the PSA that has never materialised. At its meeting on 3 February this year, however, the council resolved as follows:

"This council, recognising the Property Services Agency's apparent determination to pursue an application for development on the Great Lines, re-affirms its policy of preserving the whole area as a designated open space and supports and congratulates the Member of Parliament in securing an adjournment debate on that subject in the House of Commons."

The full council, at its meeting on 28 April this year, will determine the PSA's application because the PSA has demanded that the council should determine the original application now. It needs no prophet or seer to predict the outcome of that determination.

As I said a moment ago, the relationship between the council and the PSA has worsened. That is indicated by a dialogue between the PSA's district estate surveyor, Mr. J. F. Thompson and the council's new chief executive, Dr. Chilton. Dr. Chilton, keen to know the provenance of the MOD's tenure of the land, requested a sight of the original conveyances and/or the Acts of Parliament by which the land came into the Crown's ownership. Mr. Thompson's response in a letter dated 22 January this year was uncompromising and, I think unhelpful. It ran as follows:

"I refer to your letter of 19th December and our subsequent telephone conversation and would confirm that at the present time policy constraints are such that it is almost inevitable that the subject area of land will be offered for sale on the open market, either by auction or tender and therefore a sale to your Authority should not be regarded as a real possibility.

The documentation that has been requested is not that which we would generally circulate and will in fact only be available to a successful purchaser to enable the legal formalities to be completed. As you will fully appreciate there is at present a planning application before the Council for residential development on part of the land and we are awaiting your response to my letter dated 12th December; however, you will, no doubt, be shortly forwarding details of the proposals for the area which are considered by your Council to be acceptable."

After consultation with the council's sub-committee that was set up specifically to consider the matter, Dr. Chilton replied, in a letter of 19 February 1987, as follows:

"They"—

that is the sub-committee—

"propose to obtain Counsel's opinion on any means of preventing the disposal for development of this part of the Great Lines. From their knowledge of the history of the area they consider that there is a possibility that there were restrictions in the original conveyances of the Great Lines, or in the Acts of Parliament authorising those conveyances to the Government, which prevent the Government from disposing of the area for development, and they want this fully investigated. It is for this purpose that I need copies of the original conveyances which I have already asked you to let me have. I reported your response to the Sub-Committee and they instructed me to request you to provide this copy documentation and a note of the Acts of Parliament under which the conveyances were authorised, within 14 days, and to inform you that if you fail to do so the Member of Parliament will be asked to raise questions in the House of Commons about the matter."

Dr. Chilton still awaits a reply to that letter.

The Great Lines is by far the most controversial piece of redundant Ministry of Defence land, and the council has set its face against the development of any of it. I am pleased to play my part in that fight against development. I share the council's belief that there may well be covenants in the original conveyances that favour the council's stand. I am also concerned to know whether the Ministry of Defence or the Property Services Agency, acting as estate agent, has fulfilled its obligations under the Crichel Down rules. Have the heirs to the original owners been sought?

There is another intriguing possibility. Was any part of this land common land before its appropriation by the Crown? If that were so, the claim that the Great Lines should remain as a public open space for the benefit of the good people of Gillingham and Chatham would be irresistable. It could even be transferred to an organisation of commoners. In any case, Gillingham borough council and Rochester-on-Medway city council are likely to be urged to declare the Great Lines as public open space on the draft local plan that is now in the course of preparation. In this European Year of the Environment, it would even be appropriate to declare the Great Lines a development-free zone, to use the common parlance of the day.

Within the last few hours, information has been given to me that gives me cause for great hope, and I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to listen particularly carefully to this. Notwithstanding the obduracy and obstruction of the PSA, I have been able to turn up the original Act of Parliament of 1709 by which the lands for "better fortifying and securing the harbours and docks" at Portsmouth, Chatham and Harwich were conveyed. They include the relevant land. My source, from the House of Commons Library, is Statutes at Large, Volume IV, published in 1811, page 60. That Act of Parliament is still in force, and since it dealt with the conveyance of land there is no reason why it should ever have been repealed. Clause 4 reads as follows:

"And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That no private Building or Buildings shall be made or erected upon any of the Lands vested in Her Majesty"—

[Mr. James Couchman]

that is Queen Anne—

"as aforesaid; and that the whole Profits arising, or that shall hereafter arise from the same, be and are hereby appropriated and applied for and towards the Erection and Reparations of the respective Fortifications of each Place; and all and singular the Premisses shall be and are hereby enacted and declared to be unalienable from the Crown, neither shall any Part of the Premisses be demised or demisable, otherwise than during Pleasure only."

No wonder the PSA did not want to release the papers to the council, because it seems to me that the sale of the Great Lines, and much other land besides in Portsmouth, Chatham and Harwich, for the development of private housing would be illegal on two counts.

Clause 4 of the 1709 Act clearly places a statutory prohibition on the erection of private buildings and also prohibits disposal of the land by the Crown. The illegality of the proposed sale of the Great Lines for development will not be lost on my hon. Friend, who is himself a fine lawyer. I suggest that the Great Lines could legally be leased as open space to the council and that a rent of one peppercorn per year would be appropriate.

I said that I would widen the scope of my remarks beyond the Great Lines. Another highly contentious planning application is currently winging its way towards my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, on appeal. I do not expect my hon. Friend to comment on it. One of the few substantial deciduous woods left in Gillingham or, indeed, in the Medway towns, is known as East Hoath woods and is threatened with destruction. The regional health authority, which owns the land, is seeking permission to build a facility for the mentally handicapped on part of that land. That is not opposed. However, it seeks also to develop the remainder for houses. The council refused planning permission for the housing in the hope of saving part of the woods. Unfortunately, a long out-of-date town plan, which zones the area as residential in preference to the alternative, which was then light industrial, makes an appeal difficult to resist. With a heightened awareness of the preciousness of undeveloped land, my constituents are hoping against hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not allow an appeal on that application.

Along the banks of the Medway, and through the northern strip of my constituency, there is a sizeable area of agricultural land, much of it not very intensively farmed. The pessimists locally already see a growing pressure for residential development, because already the ownership of some of that land is what might best be called speculative. The council, a little in the mould of Canute, has bought an area alongside the Medway at Motney hill and is creating a riverside country park. However, all around the pressure, mainly from outsiders with no strong attachment to Gillingham, is for development.

It is for these reasons that I urge my hon. Friend, with his responsibility for the PSA, to call in the whole matter of redundant MOD land in Gillingham and the Medway towns, to suspend any further progress of the planning application on the Great Lines, and to instruct his officials at the PSA to sit down with the Gillingham borough council, in the hope that by discussing "in the round", and in total, the entire likely redundant land holdings of the MOD, both parties can co-operate in achieving a felicitous outcome, with development where that is sensible, and with conservation where natural justice and common sense demand it.

The Government have a heavy responsibility to the local population in the disposal of their redundant Crown land. That responsibility must not be sacrificed in the interests of short-term land profit. The Medway towns have given too much, over too many years in the service of the Crown for their opinions on the development of Crown land in the towns to be ignored. They will not allow officials of the PSA to ride roughshod over them in this matter.

I am not against all development. I am not a member of the "never a blade of grass shall be touched" tendency, far from it. I rejoice at the prospect of the great development in the former naval base, which is being undertaken by English Estates. That will be a considerable asset when it is completed. However, that great development, which offers so much in potential employment, housing and leisure must be balanced by the sensible retention of "green lungs" and woodlands nearby.

Every acre of green land and woodland, which is sacrificed to concrete, bricks and mortar, is gone for ever. My right hon. Friend and hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment shoulder a heavy burden in maintaining the balance between development and conservation. I understand the message that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State delivered when he spoke in Cambridge this week to the delegates at the Nature Conservancy Council's first national conference to mark European Year of the Environment. However, in assessing redundant MOD land in Gillingham, it is without doubt that the Great Lines are worth conserving; whereas much of the other land in the Ministry's tenure would benefit from development. Indeed, Gillingham council has suggested its willingness to consider favourably the development of its surplus Government land in return for the conservation of the Great Lines. That was made clear by Dr. Chilton in his letter to Mr. Thompson of 19 February.

May I conclude by asking my hon. Friend to redeem his promise of 16 December 1986 and come to Gillingham to see the Great Lines and other surplus land whether the MOD has yet declared it so or not. I feel certain that he will then see the merit of my case and the council's aspiration to avoid the loss of a priceless and well-loved recreational area in my constituency.

2.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) on deploying his arguments forcefully on behalf of his constituents. I listened with interest to the points that he raised and the eloquent way in which he read from ancient statutes. I shall ask my officials to read them so that they can advise me whether the implications of the statutes are as my hon. Friend described them.

The Crichel Down code does not apply, and has never applied, to land purchased before 1935. My hon. Friend accepts that the great lines were acquired long before 1935 and, indeed, in the early 18th and 19th centuries. I hope he will accept that the Crichel Down issue is a red herring, even if some other matters have yet to be proved such.

There are substantial areas of Crown land in the Gillingham area and its surroundings which are owned by

the Ministry of Defence. Some of this is undeveloped, and I am aware of my hon. Friend's view that there is a need for a strategy to be established for its future, with the MOD, the PSA and the local planning authority working together in the public interest.

I must make one thing clear straight away. Whether or not this land owned by the MOD should be retained in its present state, developed for defence purposes or declared surplus to that Department's needs is entirely a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. It would be inappropriate for me to comment during this debate on propositions that the MOD should or should not make its operational decisions in particular ways or with particular non-defence aims in mind.

Nevertheless, when any development or re-development is proposed this is carefully considered by the Ministry of Defence in consultation with the PSA and normally, at an appropriate stage, informal discussions take place with the local planning authority. These discussions are usually tripartite in the sense that they include MOD specialists, representing the defence interests, PSA officials, as the MOD's professional advisers, and planning officials, and in major cases the chairman and members of the planning committee representing the local planning authority. This is, given good will on all sides, conducted in a spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding of each others' interests. These informal discussions are then followed by a formal written consultation which is considered and dealt with by the relevant planning committee. I must emphasise that operational proposals are, for obvious reasons, initiated by the MOD—that is its business—while consideration of local planning issues and policy is in the first instance the business of the local planning authority.

These formal consultations with local planning authorities are part of a non-statutory procedure which is invariably followed by all Government Departments before engaging in any activity which would require planning permission if it were to be carried out by a private sector body or individual. In the case of proposed development or a change of use by the MOD, the planning consultations are normally carried out on its behalf by the PSA.

That, then, is the position on development proposals. When, on the other hand, the Ministry of Defence decides that land is surplus to its operational requirements it is handed to the PSA for disposal: the normal procedures then are that it is sold on the open market for the best price. That is Government policy. It is not wholly inflexible and it is always open to hon. Members, local planning authorities or individuals to seek to persuade me to vary the rules. Nevertheless, an open market sale is the usual method of disposal and sales of land by private treaty to public bodies, such as water authorities, electricity boards, and local authorities, are permitted only where the authority concerned demonstrates an overriding need to acquire the property to meet operational requirements to fulfil its proper and necessary statutory obligations. In the case of the Great Lines, my predecessor and I have made it clear on numerous occasions that we have yet to be persuaded that Gillingham borough council has such a need and, on my instructions, the PSA has been proceeding with an open market sale.

Perhaps I should at this point explain that while where development by Government Departments is proposed, a non-statutory consultation takes place, when it is proposed to sell Government-owned property a normal statutory planning application is now legally acceptable since the enactment of the Town and Country Planning Act 1984. This is what has been happening in respect of Great Lines, and I understand that the PSA is still awaiting a formal decision on this. My hon. Friend confirmed that, although he has said that he knows exactly what the decision will be. It is an odd state of affairs that everybody seems to know exactly what will be decided in a committee that has not yet met.

Mr. Couchman: I do not know what that decision will be. I said that I would feel that no great foresight was needed to see what the decision was likely to be.

Mr. Chope: I apologise if I misrepresented what my hon. Friend said. I looked at the substance of what he was saying and thought that he meant that the matter was decided already. From my point of view, and that of the PSA, we have to wait to see what the decision is and then decide what action we should take. I am told that that meeting is on 28 April, and assuming that the decision follows the council's recently stated opposition to any development on the site, this leaves me with a choice of either instructing the PSA to take the matter to appeal or instructing its marketing agents to sell on the open market.

My hon. Friend has asked me to go to look at the Great Lines myself and I said in December that I would do so. I thought that it would be better if I waited until the outcome of the planning application has been determined. In December, I expected that that would be February, and My hon. Friend said then that that was likely. We now know that it will not be determined until the end of the month, but I assure my hon. Friend that I have asked my Office to make the necessary arrangements for a visit. We have had a discussion about this, and I hope that my visit will be able to take place within the next few weeks.

As regards future disposals, it would always be the PSA's intention to discuss strategies with local planning authorities where such discussion seems likely to be fruitful. For example, the MOD is at present considering the release of land at Lower Lines in Gillingham and, although the extent of the land to be released is still under consideration within the MOD, the PSA has instructed agents to enter into preliminary discussions with local planning officials in the hope that constructive proposals will emerge prior to a planning application being submitted.

Of course, each planning application—or consultation about development—must be treated on its own merits, bearing in mind any local or strategic plans which exist or are being formulated by the local planning authority. On these, the PSA—usually the local PSA estate surveyor and his MOD or armed service colleagues—will willingly participate in any discussions in connection with the formulation of plans, clearly reserving the right to object to proposals when draft plans are issued and to vary stated positions in the light of changed or changing operational requirements.

Should the MOD decide to release substantial areas of land in the Gillingham area—I am not suggesting that it will, I do not know, as I say, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence—then there would be no question but that the PSA—following the precedent of the Chatham dockyard disposal—would seek to evolve a sensible and rational programme

[Mr. Chope]

of land release and disposal, taking fully into account the wishes and ambitions of local people and the planning authorities. The Chatham dockyard disposal was an exceptional case that required exceptional measures, and the successful implementation of its disposal was due, in no small way, to the excellent co-operation between local and central Government—ably supported by the local hon. Members—in formulating a future policy for land use which minimised the impact on the local community and which will in the long term ultimately benefit the Medway towns.

Considerable business is now passing through the area transferred to the Medway (Chatham) Dock Company — a subsidiary of the Medway Ports Authority. I understand that English Estates is working closely with the local planning departments in formulating future plans —for example the proposal that the Tropical Research Institute, which is the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, should be rehoused in the fine buildings that were formerly known as HMS Pembroke. There is also the historic dockyard where the trust jointly formed by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Defence and for the Environment is working on what promises to be a major tourist attraction.

My hon. Friend mentioned conservation. On existing undeveloped areas of land, including woodland, the Ministry of Defence has an impressive conservation record. In saying this, I am not commenting on the planning application about some area health authority land that is before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. As my hon. Friend has said, it would be inappropriate for me to do so. In the Gillingham area, the local conservation group is run by the Army with expert advisers from the Nature Conservancy Council, the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation, and Maidstone museum. The MOD conservation officer frequently attends and the PSA's estate surveyor participates in the discussions and helps to carry out many of the recommendations.

The group meets four or five times a year and there are also regular field meetings. Most of the matters discussed affect the Chatham area on the Isle of Grain, a few miles north of Gillingham on the other side of the Medway in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton). Recent meetings have discussed, for instance, a land management plan for the training areas, which included a forestry plan designed to improve, this and, where appropriate, replant woodland at Chattenden in accordance with a five-year plan. A site dossier is being compiled listing species of flora and fauna found on defence land locally; any rare or endangered species will, of course, be closely monitored by the group. Other matters that have recently been the subject of discussion by the group include orchids in Chattenden wood, sites of special scientific interest on Army training areas, and liaison with other local conservation societies. In order to make known its activities, the group proposes to have a stand at the local Army open day.

Apart from the Chattenden area, there are also undeveloped areas in and around Gillingham. We have discussed Great Lines and Lower Lines. There is also the ancient moat, at present being restored as part of the community programme—sponsored by the Army and organised by the National Council for the Rehabilitation of Offenders. That is a considerable and important task, as the moat is an important feature of the original defences of the royal naval dockyard and passes through what is now the royal school of military engineering's establishment at Brompton barracks.

My Department and the Ministry of Defence take an interest in conservation in my hon. Friend's constituency and that is why we are particularly disappointed by the breakdown in relations with local planning department officials following the meeting on 3 December. I understand that at that meeting is was agreed in principle that some amendments would be made to the planning application, but that when PSA agents tried to discuss the matter in detail, the planning officials were not prepared to do that and attempted to divert the discussion to wider issues of land use and the release of land by the Ministry of Defence. The agents are clearly not competent to deal with those issues, for the reasons that I have set out.

The PSA officials have tried to maintain a co-operative relationship with the borough officials and I have instructed PSA staff that they should continue to do so. However, that will not be helped if the council will not accept that the sale by private treaty at open space value is not possible.

To sum up, there are properly established arrangements for consulting local interests about development proposals, conservation matters and disposal strategies. Those must be tailored to individual circumstances, but there is never any question of the MOD or the PSA riding roughshod over local interests. Nevertheless, I have to say again that it must be for the MOD to make decisions about the use of defence land, at Gillingham or anywhere else.

I look forward to my visit to my hon. Friend's constituency after the Easter recess. As I have had the privilege of replying to the final Adjournment debate before Easter, I conclude by wishing you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Officials of the House a happy and enjoyable Recess.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock till Wednesday 22 April, pursuant to the resolution of the House [2 April].

House of Commons

Wednesday 22 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Harry Philip Heggie Gourlay, esquire, Member for Kirkcaldy, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

USA-USSR (Summit Meeting)

1. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made following his recent visit to Moscow of the prospects for a summit meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Following Mr. Shultz's recent visit to Moscow, prospects for a United States-Soviet summit meeting have become clearer. Mr. Gorbachev is reported as saying that he was ready to meet President Reagan in order to agree on key provisions on strategic offensive weapons, anti-ballistic missile systems and nuclear tests, as well as to conclude a treaty on intermediate range nuclear forces. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, who saw Mr. Shultz last week, has made it clear that we would welcome a United States-Soviet summit meeting if it contributed to agreement on arms control and progress on human rights and regional issues.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that, following the successful visits of a number of Western leaders to Moscow, the world now expects a deal on nuclear weapons? If the Prime Minister trusts Mr. Gorbachev, why does she not only give up cruise missiles but place Trident in these negotiations or further negotiations? Why do the Government not make sure, if a summit takes place, that the French and British independent nuclear deterrents are, if possible, on the table for negotiation?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Member must not try so hard to turn potential silk purses back into sows' ears. It is wholly desirable not just to freeze armaments at their present levels but to try to cut them sharply and, indeed, to try to eliminate certain classes of arms altogether. In attempting to do that we should not put our own security at risk. That is the guiding principle that will be behind us in the months ahead.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is no case for Her Majesty's Government, or any successor Government, giving up Trident? If the possible summit takes place, does my hon. Friend agree that one test of the sincerity of Mr. Gorbachev's wish for better relations and peace will be the willingness of the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan? Has my hon. Friend any progress to report on that matter?

Mr. Renton: I agree with my right hon. Friend on both points. There is no question of our independent strategic deterrent, or the French strategic deterrent, being part of the present discussions, which concern intermediate range weapons only, and which Mr. Gorbachev did not mention as being part of these discussions during the recent visit of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to Moscow.

As to Afghanistan, my right hon. Friend is right. That would prove the sincerity of the new regime in Moscow. So far there is no practical sign of Soviet troops being withdrawn from Afghanistan. We hope that in the weeks ahead it will become more evident that they are reaching an agreement under which it will be possible for the troops to be withdrawn, and for a new Government to take shape in Kabul and represent all the Afghan people.

Mr. James Lamond: Would it not be advisable for this summit meeting to take place as quickly as possible, before those in the United States and in Europe—led by our Prime Minister—who are determined to sabotage any attempt at world nuclear disarmament, are able to exercise their influence too much? May we be told whether the Prime Miniser is a multilateral nuclear disarmer?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman's words about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister being determined to sabotage these efforts are so ridiculous as hardly to deserve any answer. It is clear from the initiatives that my right hon. Friend took in Moscow that she is one of the creators of the momentum towards arms control. It was her insistence on the Soviets not maintaining their monopoly in the shorter range intermediate nuclear weapons that has subsequently caused Mr. Gorbachev to say that he is prepared to consider abandoning that monopoly altogether.

Dr. Glyn: Does my hon. Friend agree that while the requirements of the United States may be different from ours it is, nevertheless, vital that in any agreement the United States and Great Britain act together to reach an agreement that secures not only their security but ours as well?

Mr. Renton: Yes, my hon. Friend puts his finger on the point exactly. The road that we must follow is to make quite certain that we do not jeopardise our security at the lower levels of armaments that we wish to achieve, while at the same time ensuring that we do not lose the opportunity to arrive at a sensible and balanced arms control agreement.

Mr. Healey: Now that the Prime Minister at last fully supports the zero option for medium-range missiles in Europe, will she not be persuaded to join President Reagan in welcoming a zero option for shorter range missiles, rather than seek to freeze shorter range missiles at a level that ensures a permanent superiority—she claims, of 9:1—in favour of the Soviet Union? If her odd position in this is not simply due to what the Russians call her nuclearphilia, and if it is really inspired by concern

about the conventional balance in Europe, why has she not taken up the Soviet offer of talks on conventional weapons in Europe, aiming at a 25 per cent. cut in the next three years, plus the removal of any existing disparities between the two sides in this sector? The Minister will recall that the Soviet Government first put this proposal forward last June. Why has there so far been no response from the Western side?

Mr. Renton: The right hon. Gentleman has become the Walter Mitty of the arms control world, with his recent claim on television that he personally had invented the zero-zero option. In the past six weeks Mr. Gorbachev has made three different offers about shorter range intermediate nuclear weapons, each of which has moved the Russian position somewhat nearer to NATO's position. It would be foolish for NATO now, within a matter of hours, to take final decisions without carefully considering what its course of action should be. That consideration is being carried out by groups of experts in NATO, who are meeting today.

On the question of reduction of conventional weapons, the right hon. Gentleman should know that last December the North Atlantic Council agreed that there should be two separate types of negotiations, one dealing with conventional stability at lower levels, and the other on confidence building measures. The first discussions have already taken place with Warsaw pact countries about the conventional stability.

Treaty of Rome

2. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to present to Parliament a revised text of the Treaty of Rome, incorporating the amendments contained in the Single European Act treaty.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Yes, Sir.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful for that reply. Now that there has to be a referendum in Eire, what is the earliest date at which it will be known whether the Single European Act treaty will be confirmed? Secondly, while incorporating these amendments, would it not be desirable to print, in the same volume, those articles of the Single European Act which do not amend the Treaty of Rome but which nevertheless are still binding on this country?

Mrs. Chalker: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's second question is yes. The answer to his first question is that the Single European Act will come into effect on the first day of the month following the last ratification, which will presumably be some weeks after the referendum—if it goes as the Irish Government hope.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is it not now clear that if a 12-member Community is not to relapse into total immobility some advance towards qualified majority voting, as it is contained in the Single European Act, is absolutely essential?

Mrs. Chalker: It is necessary and it has, of course, already occurred on a number of articles under the Act. The Single European Act will extend that process and will assist us in completing the internal market by 1992.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Minister not think that it is much more important that article 138 of the Treaty of Rome be put into effect and that we have a common electoral system by the time of the next European elections? The Minister smiles, but would she not regard it as pretty disgraceful if, as is perfectly possible under the present system, a party obtained 30 per cent. of votes, but gained no representation?

Mrs. Chalker: I know that the hon. Gentleman is looking for help from any quarter. I do not believe that changing the electoral system will necessarily help him in the way that he persists in thinking it will.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is my hon. Friend not at all worried about the commitment in the Single European Act for the harmonisation of value added tax? That offers us the prospect of value added tax on food, new house building, electricity, gas and newspapers. Will my hon. Friend at least give us the assurance that she will seek to use the refusal of the Irish courts to ratify this Act to delay the EEC in imposing value added tax where we do not want it?

Mrs. Chalker: I must tell my hon. Friend that, first, all decisions on Community tax measures, if put forward, would require unanimity. No such Commission proposals have been put forward. With regard to any ideas on VAT or on tax approximation, whether on food or other items, the British Government would decide what we would do and any changes would require unanimity. No proposals have been put forward, and I do not believe that the Commission would make proposals that would increase burdens on traders at the very time when we are seeking to open up the internal market.

Mr. Robertson: When the Minister was pushing through the Single European Act last year she told us that it was all in aid of a new, relevant European unity. Perhaps the Minister will now tell us why, that before the ink is even dry on the new treaty, the British Government are sabotaging the Community's new high technology research programme? As that programme is probably the single most useful, most necessary and most effective way of Europe getting together, why is this stubborn, Luddite Government endangering hundreds of Community-financed research projects in Britain by being the last obstacle to agreement?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman has surpassed himself in hyperbole today. Let me tell him the facts. First, the United Kingdom believes and has always believed that Community research has an important part to play in promoting competitiveness within European industry. At all times we have sought to ensure and we will continue to do so, that the resources are targeted on that objective — in other words the competitiveness of European industry, and not the large, across-the-board increases that have been proposed by the Commission. The Belgian presidency's latest proposals are still on the table and are still being examined. The hon. Gentleman should get this matter into proportion. The Commission's R and D programme accounts for just 2 per cent. of the total R and D effort across all member states. We are not blocking that programme; we are seeking to ensure that every penny of the money is properly targeted on where in can result in an increase in competitiveness in European industry.

Passports (Forgery)

4. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take to prevent further forgery of British passports by Israel or other foreign states.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): We deplore the recent incident involving the misuse of forged British passports by the Israeli Government. In response to strong protests, the Israelis gave assurances that there will be no recurrence. Added security features in the machine-readable passport to be introduced next year should make forgery more difficult and more detectable.

Mr. Adley: Can my hon. Friend confirm that that has been done on three occasions, that it was done with the full knowledge of the Israeli Government, and that the British Government have no information about what use was made of those passports? Does my hon. Friend not think that a light slap on the wrist to the Israeli ambassador for that grotesque deception is in marked contrast to what the Government's reaction would have been had such deception been carried out by an Arab Government? Why are there double standards in this case?

Mr. Eggar: There are no double standards. I assure my hon. Friend that his information is correct. This is the third time on which such an incident has occurred, but we have made it perfectly clear to Israel that such behaviour by a friendly Government is completely unacceptable and bound to prejudice our relations. We have sought and secured a categorical assurance of non-recurrence.

Diplomatic Immunity

5. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received seeking a review of diplomatic immunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received a number of recent representations on this subject. We agreed with the 1984 report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that it would be wrong to regard amendment of the Vienna convention as the solution to the problem of abuse of diplomatic immunities. That remains our view. We attach great importance to applying the provisions of the convention strictly and have made that clear to the Diplomatic Corps in London.

Mr. Bruinvels: I should like to express some disappointment, because I feel that the 1961 Vienna convention on diplomatic relations should be amended. Does my hon. Friend accept that more than 50 serious alleged offences committed here by diplomats from abroad is an unacceptably high level of charges being brought? Should not all diplomats behave in an honourable way when they are in this country, and not rely on diplomatic immunity? Should not the leaders of missions always agree to a waiver when the British Government request it? Should not the "London Diplomatic List" be amended to include all their relations, friends and employees who are also entitled to diplomatic immunity, and who at the moment seem to get away with it?

Mr. Eggar: Both the Government and the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs disagree with my hon. Friend about the need to amend the Vienna convention. With regard to his comments on serious offences, the number of offences has fallen since the introduction of stricter standards in April 1985 in the White Paper. In addition, the number of withdrawals requested has risen since then. We make it clear to the Diplomatic Corps that we expect it to waive diplomatic immunity in respect of serious offences and, as my hon. Friend is aware, in at least one recent case diplomatic immunity has been waived.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that in the previous parliamentary Session we had a late night discussion on diplomatic immunity? One of the Minister's hon. Friends, the other police spokesperson, moved an amendment to deprive these people of their immunity. As a result of a debate on the issue he proceeded to try to withdraw the amendment, with the consent of his hon. Friends. The net result was that we on this side of the House voted to get rid of diplomatic immunity and the Tories ran for cover.

Mr. Eggar: I have taken careful note of the hon. Gentleman's version of events, but the fact is that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Government recently looked at the matter. We believe that diplomatic immunity needs to be retained, not least because our diplomats need the protection of immunity in sometimes hostile and lawless countries.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: But does my hon. Friend not agree that the British people believe that it is time we stopped pussyfooting around with what is diplomatic immunity and what is not? Is it not time that diplomatic immunity meant only countries' needs to deal with one another? Why should Nigeria have diplomatic immunity for parking fines? Why should speeding, rape and pillage be included? Is it not time that we got rid of that and said that we have diplomatic immunity only in respect of each other's foreign affairs and their representatives?

Mr. Eggar: I have taken careful note of my hon. Friend's views, but he is slightly out of date. The latest statistics show that the Nigerian high commission has considerably improved its record on parking. The number of unpaid fines has fallen from over 108,000 in 1984 to 23,000 in 1986, and is falling fast. My hon. Friend should give credit where credit is due.

Pakistan

6. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Pakistan.

Mr. Eggar: We have warm and friendly relations with Pakistan. At the invitation of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister of Pakistan paid a successful official visit to Britain from 5 to 9 April.

Mr. Spencer: Does my hon. Friend agree that the help that is being given by the Pakistan people and Government to the 3 million Afghan refugees is not only worthy of our highest praise but justifies further support from this country?

Mr. Eggar: I entirely agree with my hon. and learned Friend. The assistance given to the Afghan refugees by the Government and people of Pakistan is beyond praise. They have paid a considerable price for the assistance that they have given, and I am sure that the whole House recognises that.

Mr. Foot: When the Prime Minister of Pakistan came to this country the other day, did the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary take the opportunity to stress to him how strongly opposed the British Government must be to the development of nuclear weapons by Pakistan, particularly in the light of representations that have come from the Indian Government and other Governments in Asia on this subject? Do the Government not think that it is rather invidious to preach non-proliferation in Asia while we are seeking to uphold the existence of nuclear weapons in Europe? Are we not absolutely committed to the non-proliferation treaty, and was that matter discussed with the Pakistan Government?

Mr. Eggar: Both my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary raised our concern about recent reports of the possible development of nuclear weapons in Pakistan. The Prime Minister of Pakistan gave assurances that Pakistan's nuclear programme was peaceful and for civil purposes only.

Mr. Tom Clarke: During the meeting of the two Prime Ministers, did our Prime Minister, consistent with her meeting with Mr. Gorbachev, raise the question of the abuse of human rights? If so, what representations did she make?

Mr. Eggar: The question of the Ahmadis was raised, as were the cases of one or two individuals.

Zircon

7. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department of the current state of investigations into the Zircon affair.

Mr. Renton: As the hon. Member is aware, the article and film by Mr. Duncan Campbell on Zircon are the subject of a police investigation into possible breaches of the Official Secrets Act. In these circumstances, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the matter he raises.

Mr. Dalyell: When, at 15.05 hours on Monday 26 January, Chief Inspector Ray Dowd of the Metropolitan police told Mr. Alan Protheroe, the assistant director general of the BBC, that he would have to take further instructions, were those instructions from the lead Department, in this matter the Foreign and Commonwealth Office? If not, were they from Downing street? Who did they come from? Who was in a position to give further instructions to chief inspector of the Metropolitan police?

Mr. Renton: If the hon. Gentleman is asking whether the police operation was directed from 10 Downing street or by any member of the Government, of course it was not. Apart from the Law Officers acting in their prosecuting capacity, the Government had no involvement in the police operations.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that some hon. Members would do better to employ their time in thinking about the defences of the United Kingdom and not so much about coming into the Chamber to make cheap political points at the expense of the nation's security?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I have strong sympathy with what my hon. Friend has just said.

Mr. Foulkes: In spite of all the huffing and puffing of the "tea dancers" on the Tory Benches, does the Minister understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and others will continue to search for the truth in this matter? Did the Minister see the article in *The Independent* of 11 February by Tony Bradley, professor of constitutional law at Edinburgh university? In that article — *[Interruption.]* Listen. In that article Professor Bradley observes that the prosecutor in Scotland must take account of the wishes of the victim, and in the Zircon case the alleged victim was the Foreign Office. Can the Minister tell the House, honestly, how the views of the Foreign Office were taken account of by the prosecutor and what the Foreign Office has been told now about the progress of the investigation?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman raises three separate issues. First, I do not remember the article in *The Independent* to which he referred. Secondly, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General did not consult members of the Government, including my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, before inviting the Director of Public Prosecutions to request the police to carry out an investigation. Thirdly, my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate is responsible for assessing the public interest in all cases of this sort in Scotland, and I have no doubt that he will have in mind the point that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's reply, I give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Central America

9. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had regarding proposals for a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Central America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss the situation in Central America. We continue to make clear to all parties our support for a peaceful settlement on the basis of the Contadora objectives.

Mr. Corbyn: Would not the Minister's stated objective of supporting the peace process in Central America be all the more believable if he were prepared to investigate the activities of KMS in the United Kingdom in recruiting mercenaries to fight against the democratically elected Government of Nicaragua? Does he agree that it is necessary for there to be a full investigation into the agreement by which Short Brothers attempted to sell Blowpipe missiles to the Contras through the medium of the Chilean Government, and that if he is to play any constructive role in the peace process in Central America he must stop any arms going from this country to the Contras?

Mr. Eggar: KMS is a private company registered in Jersey. We are aware of the reference to it in the Tower commission report, but we have seen no other evidence of its involvement. As for Short Brothers' involvement, I answered the hon. Gentleman's points at some length in the early hours of the morning before the House adjourned for the Easter recess.

Mr. Foulkes: I do not accept the Minister's denials of the British connection, and we shall return to the matter when the Congressional investigators come to Britain. However, given the impending visit of President Arias of Costa Rica to Britain, will the Minister make a valiant attempt to be constructive on the issue of Central America and say whether the Government accept the President's proposals as the basis for a peaceful solution in Central America, instead of supporting the warmongering of President Reagan?

Mr. Eggar: The Central American states have made a clear sign that the Costa Rican peace plan is for implementation in the Contadora context. We welcome the decision of the five Central American presidents to hold a summit meeting further to discuss that initiative. It is for the countries of the region to decide how that proposal should be carried forward, but we hope that early and substantive progress towards strengthening democracy and restoring stability can be made.

Republic of Ireland

10. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic to discuss Anglo-Irish relations.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend sees the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland most frequently at meetings of the European Community member states.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Minister comment on relations with the Dublin Government, and will he confirm that the new Irish Prime Minister and the new Irish Government have shown a positive attitude to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and to the Intergovernmental Conference, which is meeting today? Will he comment also on whether this augurs well for more rapid developments in future?

Mr. Eggar: We have excellent relations with the Republic of Ireland and I can confirm that we have made a good start in conducting business with the new Irish Government.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has led, or will lead, to peace, stability and reconciliation in the Province?

Mr. Eggar: We believe that the agreement has improved the framework of co-operation in a number of areas. We wish to continue to build on that agreement.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that today's Intergovernmental Conference will almost certainly signal Mr. Lenihan's intention to raise with the Foreign Secretary at their next meeting the worsening job discrimination involving Catholics in Northern Ireland? If the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland do not act urgently to check the growing imbalance in the public as well as the private sector, the present McBride principles campaign will continue to gain ground, not only in the United States, but in other countries, notably Scandinavia.

Mr. Eggar: I have taken careful note of the hon. Gentleman's views, but that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Has my hon. Friend been able to discuss with the Irish Foreign Minister the matter of border incursions? As the Anglo-Irish Agreement is in practice, does he not agree that there should be give and take on both sides, rather than difficulties being caused every time a member of the armed forces from the north crosses into the south?

Mr. Eggar: I have taken careful note of my hon. Friend's comments, but, again, I must refer him to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

USSR (Ministerial Visit)

11. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the issues raised with Mr. Gorbachev during his recent visit to Moscow.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 2 April, and to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs during the foreign affairs debate on 7 April.

Mr. Beith: In the light of the indications given by Mr. Gorbachev since the summit of willingness to make progress on short-range missiles and on conventional forces, are the Government now prepared to seek realistic bargains that will guarantee Western security, or have they taken fright at the possibility that multilateral disarmament might actually succeed?

Mr. Renton: Since the Government came into office in 1979 we have been seeking to make realistic bargains. That is why we have endorsed the zero-zero principle from the time that we came to office, and why we have sought a ban on chemical weapons that is verifiable and effective on both sides. That has been the hallmark of our period in office. We have sought stability, but at lower levels of armament, and we shall continue to do so.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that we must insist on two things in any negotiations: first, that we retain battlefield nuclear weapons to counter the conventional superiority of the Warsaw Pact; and, secondly, that we retain strategic nuclear weapons to ensure that Mother Russia realises that she cannot fight colonialist wars on other people's territory?

Mr. Renton: I note carefully the points made by my hon. Friend. Mr. Gorbachev has said that he is prepared to discuss the question of battlefield or tactical nuclear weapons, and that is one of the matters that the NATO experts will examine carefully in the weeks ahead.

As for our own strategic independent deterrent, I fully agree that that is the minimum deterrent that we require. It will be necessary as long as the level of strategic weapons on the Russian side remains as high as it is now.

Mr. Winnick: Tory Members seem to love nuclear weapons——

Mr. Dickens: We do not love the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Winnick: Fortunately.

Was one of the issues raised in the talks with Mr. Gorbachev the question of ensuring that those held responsible for the most monstrous Nazi crimes against humanity should face justice? Is the Minister aware that many of us believe that the United States should be

congratulated on deporting the person yesterday, and that others also held responsible for such crimes should be dealt with in the same way.

Mr. Renton: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that no one loves nuclear weapons and that his remark was very foolish. The fact is that the possession of nuclear weapons by the NATO countries has helped to keep the peace in Europe for the past 40 years. There is currently no prospect of the deterrent effect provided by nuclear weapons being provided by conventional forces in the near future. The hon. Gentleman's point about war criminals, was not discussed during the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow. I note with care and interest what he said about the deportation of the war criminal from the United States to the Soviet Union in the last two days.

Mr. Jackson: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the new era of arms control negotiations that seems to be opening up Britain will derive considerable advantage from being led by a Government and a Prime Minister who enjoy a position of unique respect, not only in Washington, but in Moscow?

Mr. Renton: I am quite certain that that is right. That fact enabled the Prime Minister to have many hours of very frank and useful discussions with Mr. Gorbachev during her recent visit to Moscow. It gave both her and Mr. Gorbachev a unique insight into the systems that operate in both countries. That was a very valuable reward for the steadfastness that we have consistently shown on arms control matters.

Mr. Healey: I must say that that Walter Mitty jibe comes very oddly from anybody who can talk like that about the Prime Minister's influence on arms control. If the Minister really believes that it is desirable to reduce nuclear weapons to their lowest level, compatible with our security, why does he not accept the total abolition of a whole class of weapons — short-range intermediate nuclear forces, a proposal that was under study in Washington at least a month ago—rather than seek to freeze a Soviet superiority which the Prime Minister claims is a superiority of 9:1? Can there be any excuse for such bizarre behaviour, except what the Russians accused the Prime Minister of after she left—nuclearphilia?

Mr. Renton: I regret that the right hon. Gentleman clearly did not listen to my previous answer. I said that we were prepared to consider the elimination of certain categories of nuclear weapons, provided that this did not jeopardise the security of either ourselves or other NATO members. It is precisely this point that the expert groups in NATO are considering at the present time.

Mr. Batiste: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that Mr. Gorbachev understands that the West views the improvement of the Soviet Union's record on human rights as an acid test of his willingness and ability to honour the Soviet Union's international commitments?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend has a point, but I do not think that it is possible directly to link arms control with performance on human rights. We are all delighted that the number of exit visas that are being granted to, for example, Jewish refuseniks, has greatly increased—there were 490 in the month of March—but there is still no sign of an improvement in the treatment of either the Christian orthodox priests or the Baptist pastors in the Soviet Union. Therefore, in terms of moving towards real political freedom for those with a religious or a political conscience, the Soviet Union still has a very long way to go.

Disarmament

12. **Mr. Ray Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is expected on disarmament proposals following his recent discussions with representatives of the Government of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 2 April, there was broad agreement with the Soviet Union both on the step-by-step approach to arms control and on the priorities that should be pursued. We look to early progress in those areas.

Mr. Hughes: Do the Government not recognise that they now have a historic opportunity to bring about an arms deal and that it should be grasped with both hands? Why do they not make a greater effort to obtain a coherent response from both NATO and the other major countries of Western Europe instead of, as they appear to be doing so dismally, trying to move the goal posts?

Mr. Renton: Yes, we do indeed have a historic opportunity, and we have obtained it by our consistent record since 1979—for example, by deploying cruise in answer to the deployment of the Russian SS20s — whereas the Opposition parties—the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and the leaders of the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party—voted in 1983 against the deployment of cruise. If cruise had not been deployed, we should not now be in sight of the historic achievement that was referred to by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: While welcoming the Soviet Union's recent moves on short-range weapons, may I ask my hon. Friend to tell the House what progress has been made on the vexed question of verification and what response there has been in Moscow to the excellent proposal put forward by my hon. Friend on the holding by both sides of gas weapons?

Mr. Renton: I think that my hon. Friend means, in particular, the holding of chemical weapons. In Geneva last July I was privileged to table, on behalf of the United Kingdom, an initiative on challenge inspection as the ultimate safety net of verification on chemical weapons, and progress has been made on that. However, there is much detailed work still to be done, and we are discussing it with other members of the conference on disarmament.

As my hon. Friend said, verification remains the absolute necessity of arms control agreements. There is absolutely no point in arriving at arms control agreements that cannot be properly verified, because the resultant sense of insecurity could be much worse than that which we have at present.

South Africa

14. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the European Council of Foreign Ministers proposes to take any initiatives on South Africa in the coming months.

Mrs. Chalker: Foreign Ministers of the Twelve will continue their efforts to work to promote peaceful dialogue, with the aim of achieving fundamental change in South Africa.

Mr. Hughes: In the light of the even more oppressive attitudes and actions adopted recently by the South African Government, who have now made it illegal even to pray for the release of detainees, and who have taken further action against the front-line states, do the Government still hold to their attitude that President Botha's regime is a regime of reform? If the National party Government are re-elected on 6 May, will the Government change their attitude, which has left them isolated both in the European Community and in the world at large? Will they work with the European Community to agree a package of effective and tough sanctions that will actually do something to liberate the oppressed majority in South Africa, with a lead being shown by this country for once?

Mrs. Chalker: We all regret the developments that are further repressing the people's views in South Africa, and we follow with concern some of the developments in the white election campaign. However, it is not true that no reforms were achieved under the Botha Government. They were insufficient reforms, but some reforms were achieved.

The hon. Gentleman asked about progress with our European partners. We, with our Commonwealth and European partners, have taken more measures in this regard than have any other Government. We totally condemn apartheid. We seek to take positive action to promote a peaceful dialogue. We seek to help young black South Africans, 80 of whom have just arrived in Britain on scholarships. We are taking a firm line on human rights abuses and making démarches where necessary. We are taking action with the Twelve and with the Commonwealth, and we shall continue to do so, because the measures that we are taking are those that are most likely to achieve change. Sanctions would not achieve the changes claimed for them.

Sir Ian Lloyd: Has my hon. Friend had a chance to ascertain the accuracy of recent reports that Mr. Mugabe has scraped together every penny of foreign currency that he can to acquire a large number of MIG 29 aircraft? Has she had an opportunity to assess the significance of that event for the stability of this very sensitive region?

Mrs. Chalker: I have, indeed, seen reports similar to those described by my hon. Friend, but we have no evidence to show that that has occurred. We cannot imagine how the purchase could be paid for even if the idea is uppermost in the mind of the Zimbabwe Government. We shall, of course, watch the security situation in the whole of Africa with the greatest care.

Mr. George Robertson: What hope can there be for any European-based initiative if the United Kingdom Government continue to veto effective sanctions against South Africa in the United Nations? What conceivable excuse can there be for the craven defence of apartheid represented by the British veto in the UN two weeks ago, given that the package of sanctions proposed was exactly that endorsed by the Congress of the United States of America?

Mrs. Chalker: I have to say that members of the Security Council have always held different views on policies towards South Africa. The common approach needed for a mandatory sanctions resolution does not exist and never has existed. Only one of the six Western Security Council members supported the draft resolution in February. In our action we have been seeking to pursue, as we have done throughout, our view that mandatory sanctions will not bring about the changes in South Africa that will lead to the dialogue that we want and that in turn can lead to a Government who represent all the people.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that one initiative that could be taken by the Government and the EEC would be to encourage British companies in South Africa to increase their activity? Does my hon. Friend agree further that the prospects of black South Africans are far enhanced by the ability to get a job because of greater economic activity rather than sanctions, which are advertised by the Opposition?

Mrs. Chalker: We are well aware that many South Africans, including black South Africans, have been worried about the disinvestment that has taken place and the punitive sanctions favoured by the Opposition parties. Those people have said in as many words that that will cost them jobs and welfare. It is up to individual commercial companies to decide what to do. The Government will not encourage disinvestment. It is right that British companies, along with many companies active in South Africa, should encourage initiatives from the private sector to improve conditions and to assist changes in South Africa. To that end, we have had discussions with the British Industry Committee for South Africa. We await further details on the scope of any such proposals.

USSR (Human Rights)

15. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, during his recent visit to Moscow, he discussed with the Soviet Foreign Minister the proposed international forum on human rights.

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. My right hon. and learned Friend drew Mr. Shevardnadze's attention to this proposal, tabled by Western delegations at Vienna, and urged that it be given serious consideration.

Mr. McKay: Does the Minister agree that, in discussions on human rights with the Soviet Union or any other country, our voice would be stronger, and more notice taken of it, if we expressed our views on human rights in countries such as South Africa and Saudi Arabia, on which this Government seem to be strangely silent?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. We raise our voice about abuses of human rights wherever they occur, whether in Chile, South Africa or Indonesia, and when we think that there is a genuine case.

Mr. Janner: When the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Prime Minister were in Moscow and discussed human rights issues, their approaches on the persecution of Jewish people in that country were much appreciated by both sides of the House. However, have any people allowed out of prison, labour camp or exile been released from the Soviet Union or must those such as Ida Nudel, Vladimir Slepak, who was on hunger strike, and Josef Begun, simply be left to rot in Moscow instead of being allowed out of the country in accordance with the universal declaration of human rights?

Mr. Renton: I take the hon. and learned Gentleman's point and thank him for his kind words about the work done by the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on the issue of the Jewish refuseniks and others. The hon. and learned Gentleman is right in pointing out that it is not enough to be released from a prison camp or a gulag. It is now necessary for some of those who have been released to obtain their exit visas. We shall work towards that. The hon. and learned Gentleman might like to know about one of the family reunification cases raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. Mrs. Anna Abdulkadyrova has just received permission to leave the Soviet Union to visit her daughter in this country.

Hong Kong

17. **Sir Peter Blaker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the Hong Kong Public Order (Amendment) Ordinance.

Mr. Renton: We have received a number of representations about this. While it is mainly a matter for the Hong Kong Government, we support the action they have taken. They have repealed a number of long-standing provisions giving them wide powers over the press, retaining only a power to act against anyone publishing false news likely to cause alarm to the public or disturb public order.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is my hon. Friend aware that Her Majesty's Government are right to allow Hong Kong to manage its own affairs to the maximum possible extent? Does he agree that it would be wrong even to contemplate reversing the recent decision of the Hong Kong Government and the Legislative Council? Nevertheless, is my hon. Friend aware that there is some concern on the part of certain hon. Members and some organisations outside the House involved with the freedom of the media as to whether this ordinance is necessary or desirable, although they recognise that it is much less restrictive than previous ordinances? Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that there will be an opportunity for the Legislative Council to have another look at this matter?

Mr. Renton: I note carefully what my right hon. Friend, with his deep knowledge of Hong Kong affairs, has said. Two or three weeks ago I saw three Hong Kong journalists, all of whom were anxious to make representations to me about the point. On the question of review, I agree with my right hon. Friend. This is not immediately a matter for the British Government, but for Hong Kong. I should tell the House and all those who may be concerned about the matter that ordinances can be reviewed at any time if there is a genuine need to do so and such a need is identified. In this case it is surely better to let things settle down and to see how the new measure works. If, subsequently, the Legislative Council wishes to review it, it can do so.

Mr. Beith: The Minister may wish to resist the temptation to speculate about what would be the effect of a ban on publishing false news in this country. Nevertheless, is he aware that this is a crucial moment for people in Hong Kong and that, as they enter into a relationship with China that will depend on the continuation of guarantees, they are most anxious that the highest standards of press freedom should be asserted at this moment?

Mr. Renton: Of course, that is right. For many years Hong Kong has had a high standard of press freedom, as all of us who have visited Hong Kong know well. I point out to the hon. Member that this ordinance has been on the statute book since 1951. It has been used on only three occasions since then, and all in 1967. I see nothing in it that is likely to threaten the freedom of the Hong Kong press. Furthermore, absolutely no influence is brought to bear on the Hong Kong Government or on ourselves by the Chinese in connection with the ordinance.

South Africa

20. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek early discussions with the Government of South Africa following the general election in that country to discuss moves towards ending apartheid.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to press the South African Government to take early steps to facilitate the genuine national dialogue that is so urgently needed if the goal of peaceful but fundamental change is to be achieved.

Mr. Pike: Notwithstanding the words that the Minister has just used, and used in answer to earlier questions today, does she accept that, despite what the British Government claim to be their opposition to apartheid, that is not the way in which the majority of black people see the situation in South Africa? Will the Government give an assurance that, following the election in South Africa, they will make clear their view that we want to see positive, firm and speedy steps towards ending apartheid in that country?

Mrs. Chalker: There is absolutely no doubt about the Government's total condemnation of apartheid. I have said so many times at the Dispatch Box, on public platforms and in the media, and so have all my colleagues, from the Prime Minister downwards. On the elections on 6 May, it would be quite wrong for us to prescribe any solution for South Africa thereafter. We, along with our European partners and others who care about ending apartheid in South Africa forthwith, will continue to take such measures and make such representations to bring about a dialogue between all the peoples of South Africa. It is only in that way that peaceful change will be achieved.

Mr. Ashby: Are there any black African leaders in Southern Africa whom my hon. Friend is not prepared to meet to discuss fundamental changes in South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: I am quite sure that that is some sort of trick question. I say quite genuinely to my hon. Friend and to other hon. Members that, because I believe that we will make progress only through dialogue, I shall consider most carefully any representations that are made to me to meet leaders of Governments in South Africa and the rest of Africa.

EC (Research and Development)

21. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on

Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to co-ordinated research and development through the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Chalker: We believe that Community research has an important role to play in promoting the competitiveness of European industry. Resources must be concentrated on this objective. The taxpayer finances both national and Community research programmes and has a right to expect value for money from both.

Mr. Freud: Having ignored the advice of our research professors and failed to give the support to research and development that British scientists needed, will the hon. Lady assure the House that she will take more heed of, and listen more carefully to, representations in respect of the European Community?

Mrs. Chalker: Had the hon. Gentleman been able to hear Question 2 he would have heard me say exactly what we believe, which is that Community research has an important role to play in promoting competitiveness in European industry. However, I say to the hon. Gentleman again, as I have said to others, that we must have research properly targeted. What this country and the European Community need is winners, not white elephants, and we must examine every penny that is spent on research.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend look at the views being expressed by the science and technology committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, which urges European Governments to co-ordinate and not duplicate certain of the research and development, so that greater benefit can be spread throughout the whole of the Community?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The reason why we have sought to examine with the greatest care how the resources in the European research and development framework programme are targeted is simply that we wish to complement and not to duplicate. That is something that we shall continue to do, because it is illusory to think that the framework programme could transform our international position, but it could be useful in broadening the research that is already being done by member nations.

Service Personnel, Cyprus (Attack)

3.30 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent attack upon British service personnel in Cyprus.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): On Monday 20 April, a British Army Land Rover with two occupants came under grenade and automatic weapon attack on the main Nicosia to Limassol road in Cyprus. The driver, a British Army corporal, was lightly wounded in the leg but his passenger, the daughter of another British service man, was more seriously wounded in the back. Both were admitted to the British service hospital in Akrotiri. The driver is being discharged and the passenger's condition is stable. Quick evasive action by the driver almost certainly prevented fatalities. He is to be commended for his courage and quick thinking. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who happens to be in Cyprus for a visit to the sovereign base areas planned some time ago, visited the two casualties in hospital today.

No reinforcements have been requested, but our force levels in Cyprus are being kept under close review. It must be stressed, however, that additional British forces would not be of help in preventing an attack of this kind which took place, not in a sovereign base area, but in the republic itself, which the Cypriot authorities of course police.

In the light of this attack, the Commander British forces Cyprus has implemented special travelling procedures outside the sovereign base areas.

We have as yet no firm information as to the individuals or organisation responsible for this terrorist attack. We are giving every assistance to the Cypriot authorities in their investigation of this incident and we understand that two arrests have been made.

Mr. McNamara: I thank the Minister for his reply and join him in congratulating Corporal Bailey on his courage and presence of mind in preventing a more serious incident and trust that Miss Wilkinson will have a speedy recovery.

The security of our sovereign bases in Cyprus is not only important for our national interest, but necessary in supporting the United Nations forces and the sustaining role they fulfil in both Cyprus and the Lebanon.

When all Members of the House went to Cyprus last month—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members missed a good day. When Members from both sides of the House went to Cyprus last month they were impressed by the resolution of the troops and the security precautions then being taken following the August attack on Akrotiri. However, the constant alert, the need to protect two bases and the outlying posts as well as the families not living in the sovereign base areas places a great strain upon the resources and men of the RAF Regiment and the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Can the Minister of State say whether, following that incident, he will give further consideration to the sending of further line troops to protect the security of the bases while the present threat persists? Is the Minister satisfied with the new arrangements being made by the Commander British Forces Cyprus in order to protect the soft targets living outside the sovereign base areas?

Following the Government's cuts, will they reinstate the helicopter support squadron to such an extent that it will ensure proper aerial surveillance on the main roads between Akrotiri and Dhekelia? Will the Minister of State convey our congratulations to the Cypriot authorities for the fine police work carried out by the Cypriot force and for the great co-operation in this matter and the force's success in arresting two suspects? Finally, what evidence do the Minister and the Government have of the Libyan connection?

Mr. Stanley: I certainly endorse the importance that the hon. Gentleman attaches to the security of the sovereign base areas. The importance of that was highlighted, as he explained, by the attack last August in the sovereign base areas themselves. As the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members of the all-parliamentary group who visited Cyprus will be aware, that has imposed an additional level of stretch and commitment on our forces. However, we must consider the commitments that our forces face in relation to the commitments of the Army elsewhere. As the House is aware and will have seen in recent weeks, we face continuing pressure in Northern Ireland and a very important commitment to support the RUC. As the House is also well aware, we have recently faced a continental attack by a terrorist group in Rheindahlen.

We have considered the totality of the threats that we face, and the security requirements. I spoke to the Commander British Forces Cyprus and we are satisfied that at the moment there is no need to reinforce our forces in Cyprus. That would be a maldeployment and the wrong response to this particular attack which, as I have said, took place not in the sovereign base areas but in the area of the republic of Cyprus where the policing authority lies with the Cypriots.

The new travel arrangements have just been brought into place. I am certain that the Commander British Forces Cyprus has produced his best response to the new evidently higher risk involved in travelling on the public highway between the sovereign base areas and he will keep those new arrangements closely under review in the light of the event.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point about helicopter support, that relates to the separate United Nations commitment; we do not have—I stress this to the hon. Gentleman—the duty, and it would not be appropriate for us, to use helicopter support as a general surveillance force inside the territorial area of the republic of Cyprus. That, of course, is a Cypriot sovereign area and the policing and surveillance of that area is a matter for the Cyprus police.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's final two points, I appreciate his comments about the co-operation and skill of the Cypriot police force. We are working very closely with the Cypriots. I very much endorse his congratulatory comments about the work of the Cypriot police force. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point about any Libyan connection, at present the identity of the terrorists and their precise motivation are matters for speculation.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the House will have heard with some surprise the implication of the first part of his reply, that we do not have enough troops to send more to Cyprus? Who will defend our outside posts? What rights do our men have to defend themselves in those posts, some of which are very important? What co-operation do we get now and what will we get in future from the Cyprus forces?

Mr. Stanley: I must make it clear that I was not suggesting that we do not have enough troops to send more to Cyprus if we so wished. We could certainly send additional troops to Cyprus if we wanted. The point that I was seeking to make was that, in relation to the various threats that we have received, we do not believe that it would be justified now to reinforce the sovereign base areas when the threat has arisen outside those areas.

With regard to the ability of our forces to exercise their rights of self-defence inside the sovereign base areas in Cyprus, they have precisely the same rights as apply to British service men elsewhere inside British sovereign territory.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Minister accept that it is impossible to provide military security for all 10,000 service men and support staff and their dependants associated with the sovereign bases in Cyprus, who inevitably present attractive targets for terrorists? Does he agree that the main responsibility for countering terrorism must rest with the Cypriot authorities and is he satisfied that the current level of co-operation and practical liaison between the British military authorities and the Cypriot police is sufficient to deal with this kind of threat?

Mr. Stanley: I agree that it is self-evidently impossible to provide total security for soft targets, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are very satisfied with the extremely close co-operation that we enjoy with the Cypriot police authorities.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Members of all parties who visited Cyprus last month returned with the highest regard for the professionalism of our troops there, as shown by the corporal when he came under attack? Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that if the long-term military training value of Cyprus is to be achieved, only one and a half infantry battalions posted for the defence of our two sovereign base areas and the other half of the second battalion posted with the United Nations force are not sufficient to maintain a high standard of alert and to maximise the training potential of the island? Is my right hon. Friend aware that his assurance that that situation will be under continuous review will be welcome but that the posting of a further infantry battalion to the island would be even more welcome?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments about the professionalism of our forces in Cyprus, which has certainly been brought out in the response to the recent incident. My hon. Friend is right that some tension must exist between concentration on our training efforts in Cyprus and the carrying out of necessary security functions. Inevitably, that tension has been greater since the terrorist attack last August. I assure my hon. Friend that we are keeping the situation under close review.

I entirely take the point that, if the security threat were such that all the forces there had to spend all their time on security duties, the training value of our presence in Cyprus would be seriously undermined and we should have to consider carefully the level of our forces there.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Does the Minister agree that having half a regiment with UNFICYP and half in garrison does not allow sufficient training time, given the potential for training in Cyprus, and that the level of troops needs to be reinforced to the extent of allowing for half a regiment with UNFICYP and a whole regiment in garrison so that half the regiment could obtain the kind of training that is available? Is this not a further example of Government cuts in conventional defence?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman seeks to make a political point, but he is wholly mistaken, not least because, if at some future time we chose to reinforce the numbers in Cyprus, we should be taking forces from elsewhere who would otherwise be engaged in training tasks, probably in the United Kingdom or Germany.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, no matter what the pressure on our troops in Cyprus and whether or not there are any subsequent attacks, we shall maintain our presence there so long as the people of Cyprus wish it?

Mr. Stanley: I assure my hon. Friend that that is certainly our policy.

Massey Ferguson (Redundancies)

3.43 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement of 1,000 redundancies by Massey Ferguson in Coventry".

Last Thursday, 16 April, Massey Ferguson announced 1,000 redundancies at the Banner lane tractor factory in Coventry. That is effectively a third of the work force. If the cut is allowed to go ahead, the work force will be 2,500 compared with 9,000 some seven years ago. The announcement follows two months of short-time working which workers were promised would safeguard 450 jobs that were under threat. After two months of working a three-day week, the workers, many of whom have been loyal to the company for many years, are being rewarded with mass redundancies and even demands that those who remain should take a cut in wages.

It would be ironic, if it were not so tragic, that the announcement came within 48 hours of claims by members of the Tory Cabinet that unemployment was improving and the economy getting brighter. Massey Ferguson has given the lie to that dubious Tory claim. Such an announcement demands emergency action. It follows on the heels of the major job losses announced at Caterpillar and Westland. If publicly owned, planned and integrated, all three firms could play an enormous— *[Laughter.]* Yes, it is funny. Those firms could play an enormous role in producing equipment or airlifting grain to famine-stricken areas of the world. However, in the arcane and anarchic capitalist system, the needs of the hungry millions and the skills of thousands of engineering workers are driven apart. That problem has been compounded by the halving of the real aid given abroad by the Government and by the leeching of the international banking system on the debt crisis.

About 110,000 people—equivalent to one third of the population of Coventry—die every 24 hours because of hunger or hunger-related diseases. However, now 1,000 skilled and experienced workers in our city, which is still referred to as the Western world's tractor capital, are to be sacrificed because of what the company call a "lack of orders".

The matter is urgent and important. Quite literally, hundreds of thousands of lives in the so-called Third world demand it. So equally do thousands of jobs in Coventry, the 1,000 direct workers, the £10 million of local spending that will be lost as a result of those redundancies, and the hundreds of other families who rely on the workers at Massey Ferguson having money in their pockets and spending it in the shops and in other areas such as the service industries. If those redundancies go ahead, another hole will be punched in the local economy of Coventry.

I have been elected by thousands of workers in Coventry to come here to defend the interests of working people. However, the unelected, unaccountable extremist management of Massey Ferguson announced the redundancies of thousands of workers in our city, without debate or prior warning. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to grant the debate so that a genuine Socialist alternative to mass redundancies can be put forward in this House of Commons to give hope to the thousands of families in the city of Coventry.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement of 1,000 redundancies by Massey Ferguson in Coventry".

I in no way under-estimate the serious implications of what the hon. Gentleman has said about this for his constituency. However, I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Members (Declaration of Interests)

3.47 pm

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise with you a matter of which I have given you prior notice, although I understand that my letter, which was posted from the north of England on Good Friday, had not reached your office by midday today. Therefore, I apologise, Mr. Speaker although it is not my fault. I gave notice as soon as I was able to read the debate in Standing Committee C.

I wish to ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker, on the following matters because in my simple judgment a situation has occurred in Standing Committee C which should cause the House grave concern. At the first sitting of the Committee, dealing with the Licensing (Amendment) Bill, no fewer than three hon. Members supporting the Bill declared interests that linked them with the sale of alcoholic liquor. The *Official Report* of the Committee proceedings of Wednesday 8 April 1987 at columns 15 and 16 reports that the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) declared that he was the managing director of a small company, Chiswick Caterers Ltd., which operates five tenanted public houses.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going now to the substance. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Lewis: I am coming to that, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) declared his interest as a licensee and the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) declared his interest as an adviser to Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. In addition, the hon. Member for Gillingham is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister for Health. The Government are supposed to be neutral on private Member's Bills and I think it unusual for the Parliamentary Private Secretary to be added to the Committee in view of his relationship with the Department of Health and Social Security. I would have thought that he should be particularly careful to avoid getting involved in any argument on liquor licensing.

It is clear that no fewer than three hon. Gentlemen on the Committee have declared interests of one kind or another in a Bill which deals with the liberalising of drinking hours and increased alcohol consumption, therefore increased profits for the drink trade. Is it in accordance with the rules, practice, interests and honour of the House that those hon. Gentlemen should continue to sit on the Committee? I ask for your ruling, Mr. Speaker. If you wish to take time to consider that point, which is important for the way in which we conduct our affairs in the House, may I suggest that the Committee's afternoon siting should be suspended? I am sure that the Chairman of the Committee would give the guidance that you wish to give.

You will, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should like to reply now, because the hon. Gentleman has taken a great deal of time to raise a matter with which I can deal on the spot.

Mr. Lewis: I am coming to the point, Mr. Speaker. This is the earliest opportunity I have had to raise the matter with you as I did not see the *Official Report* of the Committee proceedings until after the House had gone into recess for Easter, so in my simple judgment I have acted correctly and, if I may say so, honourably.

I am prepared to believe that all three hon. Gentlemen consider that they acted honourably in declaring their interests, as all hon. Members must do in accordance with the traditions of the House. But surely—this is one of my main points of contention — it is wrong that legislation with far-reaching and adverse social effects can be rushed through and particularly — this is a crucial point — that the three hon. Gentlemen supported the sittings motion to sit more or less morning and afternoon which was passed before they declared their interests. Should they not have declared their interests immediately the Committee started? I recall——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is being unfair to other hon. Members who wish to take part in the Second Reading debate on the Finance Bill. Please allow me to deal with the matter——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

I have had an opportunity to read the hon. Gentleman's letter in the newspapers this morning and I must say straight away that, although I accept that he posted the letter to me, I deprecate letters addressed to me being sent to the press.

As to the substance of the hon. Gentleman's point of order, the hon. Gentleman has been here as long as I have and is an experienced Member—*[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman will know that any motions passed in Standing Committee or any other action which is taken by a Standing Committee are not subjects for appeal to me as Speaker. They are entirely matters for the Committee to determine in accordance with the House's direction. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman further.

Mr. Winnick *rose*—

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I read the article in *The Guardian* this morning with astonishment. The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) had not warned me that he proposed—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman had not given me warning or sought to talk to me about the matter which is under discussion. I have always been scrupulous in the declaration of my vested interests in licensing matters. That is well known to the House and to the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. He knew of my interests at the time that I was placed on Standing Committee C. In making my declaration of interest to the Committee, I made it clear that I had considered whether it was appropriate for me to sit on the Committee, and on balance I did view it as being appropriate and proper.

I declared the interest which I declared on Second Reading, and I declared it again in Committee after the sittings motion. I did so having spoken to the Chairman of the Committee before the Committee convened and I looked to him to guide me as to when he wanted me to declare that interest. He duly looked to me between the sittings motion, which is a technical matter and which does not impinge on the substance of the Bill, and the start of the Bill.

As for the accusation that I am Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister for Health, that is entirely true. This is a Home Office Bill, not a DHSS Bill. It would be my contention that the Bill, if passed, will lead to less rather than more abuse of alcohol. I therefore see no conflict between my position as PPS to the Minister for

[Mr. James Couchman]

Health and my serving on the Committee. I have spoken about five times in the House on this matter and I have always been scrupulous in declaring my interest.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that these are matters for discussion in Standing Committee and not on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I have another point of order.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Different point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Related.

Mr. Speaker: I will not take it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The public outside expect you to act.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am bound not by the public outside but by the Rules of the House. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and the House know that this is a matter not for the Floor of the House but for the Standing Committee.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We are not going to let go.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman starts threatening me like that I will have to take action. I shall take any other point of order which is not concerned with this matter.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Winnick: You said that you will not take a particular point of order on this issue, Mr. Speaker, but I wonder whether I could ask you this question on a wider issue which is not concerned with this Committee. In view of the widespread concern which exists outside the House—whether you accept it or not—that business interests are not sufficiently under control, would it be possible for the Select Committee to look into the matter and see whether there is any justification for the view which I believe exists—with some justification—that some hon. Members put their business interests before those of their constituents?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has a recourse. He may raise that matter with the Select Committee concerned.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it connected with this matter?

Mr. Skinner: As you know, Mr. Speaker, from time to time the Speaker's Conference is set up to deal with all kinds of matters related to electoral interests and matters which affect hon. Members. Something has been occurring lately—I shall not list all the instances—in respect of the register of Members' interests; no doubt, if you read *Hansard*, you will see references to that in the past few months. What is needed is for a Speaker's conference to look into a matter that concerns many people outside, which is that Members of Parliament should stop moonlighting altogether and become full-time Members of Parliament. They are paid well enough for doing their job. The Speaker's Conference should have this matter before it to ensure that Members of Parliament do not line their pockets with one thing or another. That necessity has been stressed by the revelations today.

Mr. Speaker: That may be so, but on the substance of this matter I am bound by the Rules of the House, and the House knows that matters of this kind should be raised in the Standing Committee concerned and with the Standing Committee Chairman and not with me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On another point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Gale.

Mr. Gale: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I accept your ruling on further discussions of this matter. However, a statement has been made in the House, which impugns my honour as a Member of the House. I seek your protection. I should like the opportunity to make a personal statement to the House on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make a personal statement, he must have it cleared by me in the usual way. As he maintains that his honour has been impugned, he may briefly state why he believes that to be so.

Mr. Gale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am particularly proud, having served an Industry and Parliamentary Trust Fellowship with the Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, to be invited to assist it further. It is a fine company, which makes a major contribution to employment in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom through tourism. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman come to the point?

Mr. Gale: You have indicated, Mr. Speaker, in the House that the processes of this House have been abused by the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis), who released his letter to the press before an answer from you and from the Committee Chairman. This matter was discussed in Committee this morning, and the Chairman is here and could be invited to make a statement. He was adamant that the Committee had behaved honourably and properly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All these matters should legitimately be raised in the Committee upstairs with the Chairman concerned, and not on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take Mr. Nellist first.

Mr. Nellist: No doubt later this afternoon and tomorrow, when *Hansard* is printed, you will have the

opportunity, Mr. Speaker to go through the exchanges of the past few minutes and to dwell on them at some length. When you do so, Mr. Speaker, perhaps you will consider this factor. A couple of years ago, I was asked to serve on the Committee considering the Nottinghamshire County Council Act. My qualification was that I did not come from Nottinghamshire. Many aspects of the running of the House separate potential conflicting constituency interests from other interests such as business interests.

There may be an avenue of consideration to prevent this from happening again. Those 300 or so Tory Members of Parliament who moonlight with business interests as directors or chairmen of companies could be excluded from considering Bills in Committee when a conflict of interest could take place, in the same way that I was selected to sit on a Committee considering a private Bill concerning Nottinghamshire because I came from Coventry.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised a matter which is not for me but for the Chairman of the Select Committee on Selection.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It must be a legitimately different point of order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You will recall a year and a half ago, when the Select Committee on Members' Interests published its report on Members' interests, that an argument developed both inside and outside the House as to the position of the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) and his interests, which he had fully declared to the House of Commons, quite properly, and his membership of a particular Select Committee of the House, again where he had quite properly declared his interest. The rules as they exist at the moment permit an hon. Member to be paid a remuneration by a firm outside the House to sit and deliberate on proceedings and, in the case of a Select Committee, to be party to the decisions taken by that Committee.

People outside the House will find it very hard to understand how it is that three Members of this House can take money in their back pockets for services rendered and come into the Committee, within our rules, and, by use of procedure, expedite the passage of a Bill before the next general election. That is the crucial issue.

You may say, Mr. Speaker, that this matter is for the Chairman of the Committee, but I put it to you that, as the custodian of our procedures here in the House, you specifically must have an interest in these matters. I ask you yourself to consult the Chairmen of the Committees and the Chairman of the Committee of Selection to ensure that these matters do not happen again. Parliament is being brought into disrepute; that is wrong, and we should act to stop it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has in fact raised the point that I said I would not hear. I have already stated that these are matters not for me but for the Chairmen of the Standing Committees and for the Chairman of the Select Committee on Selection.

Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act (Amendment)

4.6 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985; and for connected purposes.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that in the Session 1984-85, the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), having gained first place in the private Members' ballot, introduced in the House and subsequently led off the debate in January 1985 on the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Bill. The Bill received Royal Assent in June 1985 and came into force from August 1985. The substantial change to the law made by that Act was that it created an offence of supply of intoxicating substances—either by supplying or by offering to supply them to anybody under 18 or to anybody acting on behalf of somebody under 18 if the supplier

"knows or has reasonable cause to believe that the substance is, or its fumes are, likely to be inhaled by the person under the age of eighteen for the purpose of causing intoxication."

This legislation had been prefaced by attempts since 1980 to amend the law during the passage of other Government Bills, and it had been anticipated by the common law in Scotland in 1983, which had secured two convictions of shopkeepers who supplied kits by which people abused solvents.

Since the Act, which was supported at all times by the Government, went on the statute book, there has been a noticeably grave defect in that legislation. The major defect is that the law has depended for a conviction on the supplier knowing what the person receiving the substance was going to do with it. That meant that the person handing over the substance, whether butane gas, Tipp-Ex thinner or some other form of volatile substance such as aerosol spray, had to have reasonable cause to believe that it would be used for the purpose of intoxication. The evidence of the past 20 months is that proving that case has been extraordinarily difficult. Indeed, in the past 20 months, there have been but four convictions in England and Wales.

Just as the hon. Member for Tynemouth was precipitated into seeking to introduce the original legislation principally as a result of constituency experience, it will not surprise the House to learn that I am principally motivated by witnessing and sharing the grief of a family living barely 100 yd from me in Southwark when they lost their 14-year-old son in August of last year.

The law has not so far dealt with the problem, because the number of deaths from solvent abuse and other volatile substances have continued to rise. The figures are frighteningly telling, and I know their seriousness is recognised by the Government. In the 10 years up until 1981, there were 140 deaths in the United Kingdom associated with volatile substance abuse — identified from press reports, coroner's inquests and so on. However, in the years since 1981 that total has risen dramatically.

The latest recorded figures appeared in the *British Medical Journal* of December last year. They showed that there were 46 deaths in 1981; 62 deaths in 1982; 80 deaths in 1983; 81 deaths in 1984; and 116 deaths in 1985. The report in the *British Medical Journal* states:

"Most of those who died (285)(74%)"—

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over the five year period—

"were under the age of 20, and 65 (17%) were aged 10-14."

There has been an increase in the number of deaths occurring in all the major categories.

The report continues:

"Overall, gas fuels (mainly butane), solvent in glues (mainly toluene), and "other solvents" (principally plaster removers and correcting fluid thinners — mainly 1, 1, 1-trichloroethane) each accounted for around 30% of the deaths.

In 43% of cases death was attributed to the direct toxic effects of the substance".

The remaining deaths were thought to have resulted from intoxicated behaviour, which accounted for 15 per cent. of deaths,

"the method of inhalation (plastic bag over the head 16%), or inhalation of stomach contents (16%)."

All the signs are that the number of deaths will increase when the figures for 1986 are known. The reason is that it is at present extremely difficult to prohibit and educate suppliers sufficiently not to sell.

The National Campaign Against Solvent Abuse regularly surveys solvent use by young people. In the last full year, ending July 1986, it obtained information from 4,217 fourth-year pupils from 28 schools, and the figures are frightening. Overall, 23·9 per cent. of the pupils answered yes to the question:

"Have you ever tried solvent abuse in any form?"

The inquiry revealed that 37 per cent. knew someone who sniffed solvents. Both those percentages represent substantial rises from previous years. The position is that 25 per cent. of 11 to 14-year-olds have tried solvents. Two young people die each week from solvent abuse. Perhaps the most frightening statistic of all derived from that survey is that the average age of abusers is just over 13.

When a death from solvent abuse occurs within any community, there is widespread concern. Such death often occurs suddenly, without any warning. It was not surprising that, in October, my local authority, Southwark, agreed a motion, with all-party support, calling for Members of Parliament in the borough to seek to amend the present legislation to limit the supply by retailers to young people of many products used as solvent abuse that would thus prevent the repetition of the tragic death of Lee Kendall, the young local Bermondsey boy. It would also, one hopes, prevent the death of other youngsters.

When Southwark consumer protection officers carried out a survey on how well the law was being complied with they discovered—they reported it to me in a letter in November — that, dramatically, the majority of shopkeepers surveyed were not taking sufficient action to prevent the sale of harmful solvents to young people. There was a low level of awareness of the recommendations regarding sales. Of the 44 per cent. of premises selling solvent-based products, only 28 per cent. of the staff of those premises were aware of the code of practice. Only 19 per cent. of the premises conformed to the code of practice and in only 7 per cent. of premises were warning notices displayed, despite the fact that solvent-based products were within easy access of the consumers in half of those outlets.

It is clear that the campaign to prevent fatalities has not yet succeeded. It is important to register now that we cannot wait too long before further action is taken. Therefore, I have decided to seek leave to introduce this Bill.

In a reply to a written answer on 23 March, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security said:

"No new central initiatives are planned by the Department"—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1987; Vol. 113, c. *74*.]

The Minister said that the Department would keep the need for such initiatives under review. I gather that, at the moment, the Home Office has no plans to act either.

I propose therefore that the law be amended in a simple way so that, rather than conviction depending on the subjective view of the supplier, it would be an offence to supply a proscribed solvent product to somebody under 16. That is how the supply of cigarettes to under-16s is controlled and how the supply of alcohol to under-18s is controlled. One does not have to prove that somebody was coming to a shop to buy a product for a certain purpose, but one proves that there was a specific breach of the age requirement. To implement that, all that is needed is a single change to the present Act and a schedule of proscribed products. At any particular time, that can be amended by regulation—it need not come here.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that he has been speaking for 10 minutes.

Mr. Hughes: In conclusion, I believe that we should amend the proscribed list of products and substances by regulation and that the manufacturer shall have the duty specifically to alert the public to the dangers. I hope that this simple amendment will deal with the major defect in the otherwise good legislation. I hope that the House will welcome the opportunity to give leave for this Bill to start its passage through Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Gerald Bowden, Mr. Ron Lewis and Mr. Matthew Taylor.

Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act (Amendment)

Mr. Simon Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 1 May and to be printed [Bill 37].

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant document: Sixth Report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, House of Commons Paper No. 293 of Session 1986-87.]

4.18 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Budget and the Finance Bill before us today are favourable measures for the country. They are based on the increasing underlying strength of our economy and on strong public finances; six years of steady, balanced growth up at the top of the European league; six years of improving manufacturing productivity, growing more rapidly than most of our competitors. Once we had put right the economy that we had inherited — with investment going up by an average of 4 per cent. a year, again a good performance in the European league—the firm control over public spending, combined with buoyant tax revenue, has meant a prudent outcome for the public sector borrowing requirement for the year just completed and prudent levels set for the PSBR in the year we are now in.

There is no need for me to repeat the many illustrations of our increasing economic success because they were well documented in the Chancellor's Budget speech and the Budget debate in March. However, the evidence has been underlined by further indicators even since that debate a month ago.

The February trade figures show that British exporters are grasping the favourable opportunities to which the Chancellor referred in his Budget speech and which the Confederation of British Industry constantly underlines. Non-oil exports are up by 11 per cent. compared with a year ago. Between January and February, unemployment fell by 44,000—the largest monthly fall on record—and between February and March by a further 30,000. We have seen the largest fall in unemployment for a six-month period since 1973.

The CBI March inquiry showed industry's order books and output expectations at their highest levels since the information has been sought in that way. Industrial production stands at its highest level ever. With steady, unmistakeable consistency, the economic indicators across the range show that, following nine Budgets under the Government, the British economy is getting stronger and stronger.

One key test of the growing confidence in British industry, not much commented on so far in our debates, is the amount of new equity being raised for investment — investment that will produce new jobs and higher profits. In 1986, United Kingdom companies raised £7½ billion in new equity on the stock exchange—eight times the amount that they raised in 1979. That does not include the finance raised through the unlisted securities market which did not exist in 1979, nor the finance raised through venture capital funds, which in 1985 invested more than 40 times more finance than in 1979.

The growing vitality of the United Kingdom venture capital industry is a particularly encouraging development and reflects the emphasis that we have placed on encouraging entrepreneurs and promoting enterprise among small businesses, which are now positively encouraged to invest, to take risks and to grow. Venture capital investment in the United Kingdom is now higher as a proportion of gross domestic product than in the United States. A recent report by the British Venture Capital Association highlights the rate of growth of the industry in recent years. It has taken the United States venture capital industry more than 25 years to reach its present size. In the United Kingdom, a large part of the industry's growth has taken place during the past five years.

The venture capital industry looks to the long term. Its growth under the Government is one further signal of investors' confidence — and of international investors' confidence, too—in the prospects for British industry. That is also illustrated by the high level of overseas investment in the United Kingdom in recent years, reflecting the increased profitability of British industry, which in 1985 was at its highest level since 1964. In the past two years, overseas investment in the United Kingdom has amounted to almost £24 billion, but the growth in our overseas assets has outstripped even that inward investment, increasing our net asset position to an estimated £110 billion by the end of 1986. At 28 per cent. of GDP, that is the highest recorded level since the war. It compares with a level of £12 billion at the end of 1979. Nor, I stress, is that at the expense of direct investment here at home, as is shown by the high levels of capital raising, to which I referred, and of new investment in the United Kingdom itself. Moreover, as a result of that healthy position, earnings from interest, profits and dividends were over £4 billion in 1986. They will continue to make an important contribution to the balance of payments in the future and help underpin our increasingly strong position.

Those are the hard facts. But it is not just the statistics that demonstrate how our economic polices are bearing fruit and reversing the decline of earlier years. Nor is it the statistics alone, powerful though they are, which so totally destroy the Opposition's feeble attempts to belittle our now strong economic position. The official pronouncements of industrial and commercial bodies themselves—the CBI, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and many others—all bear testimony to the renewed confidence of British industry, based on their achievements and their support of our policies. They know the real world, unlike the Opposition.

That mood is confirmed by companies all over the country, which are not just reporting better results and better prospects, but repeatedly stating that as a result of the policies that we have pursued and the management measures that they have taken over the past few years they are now more efficient and in much better shape. They know it. They see the effects on the ground. That is why there is a real mood of confidence around and why the response to the Budget has been so positive. That is why the attempts of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) to work up an atmosphere of doom and gloom are getting such a nil response. It is the Opposition who are out of touch.

The strength of the recovery is spread widely across the economy. For example, the office machinery and data processing sector increased its output between 1981 and 1986 by 201 per cent. The output of the electronic

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consumer goods sector rose by 167 per cent. over the same period. In the construction industry, new orders for 1986 were up 7 per cent. on 1985. Private sector output rose particularly strongly in 1986, with commercial work increasing by 14 per cent. and private housing output rising by 10 per cent. on 1985 levels. In 1986, housing repair and maintenance reached a record level of £4·9 billion.

Major building material suppliers report booming conditions, not least because of the big increase in owner-occupation, which we have been encouraging. More people owning their own home has meant a big expansion of property renovation, maintenance and improvements. That does not come through in public expenditure figures. The Opposition fail to recognise that a Budget that cuts taxes is also a Budget that creates jobs. Let me give one example. This Budget has given more money back to the people who earn it without having to resort to irresponsible public borrowing. That will give a further boost to the building industry and provide more jobs because part of the additional spending power available will undoubtedly be used by families for further home maintenance and improvements.

The warmly favourable response to my right hon. Friend's Budget proposals has come not just from industry, not just from those with a direct interest in the Budget measures, but more widely still. They have strengthened the confidence of the financial markets with the result that base rates have fallen by ½ per cent. since Budget day, following an earlier ½ per cent. reduction the previous week. The majority of banks and building societies have announced a reduction of 1 per cent. in mortgage rates. That will be of direct help to the 8 million home owners with a mortgage loan. The exchange rate is strong and the foreign exchange reserves are rising.

All those reactions since the Budget reinforce the view that our plans for a £2·6 billion reduction in taxes, a £3 billion reduction in public sector borrowing and a £4·7 billion increase in public expenditure are proving to be a winning combination. It is a hat-trick of success, which would not have been possible without the prudent and consistent economic policies which we have followed and which would be far beyond reach if the Opposition parties were ever able to pursue their alternative Budget strategies. It is that continued strength and vigour of the British economy that gives the lie to the increasingly desperate attacks by Opposition Members.

I now refer to the details of the Finance Bill. The House will have noted that the Bill is not insubstantial. It provides plenty to occupy the full time of a normal Standing Committee. The House will forgive me if I refer only to the main proposals today. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), whom I notice in the Chamber, will wish to comment on his own report by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. I know that he will forgive me if I do not. I have only just seen it. I think that it does not refer much to the Finance Bill as such.

There is much in the Bill that is of importance and assistance to business. Clauses 107 to 122 introduce the new tax relief for profit-related pay. The significance of that new measure has ben widely recognised. It will reinforce the steps that the Government have already taken to make the labour market work more flexibly and increase the common interest and involvement of employers and employees in the success of their businesses. It has the vital extra dimension of providing automatic flexibility in labour costs.

Last year's consultation document on the subject received a generally favourable response. The House will have noted that the Chancellor has decided to double the tax relief that was originally suggested. That will add greatly to the attractions of the new scheme and means that it now provides substantial incentives. The relief proposed could be equivalent to a further 4p reduction in the basic rate of tax for a married man on average earnings whose employer takes maximum advantage of the scheme.

As my right hon. Friend has said, the scheme is not a panacea, but it will encourage British management further to play its part in bringing about changes in the operation of the labour market that could radically improve the prospect for jobs. I hope that British management will take up the challenge. Indeed, I am glad to report that the level of interest shown in the scheme is very encouraging and steadily rising. About 3,200 firms have already registered their interest with the Inland Revenue.

Clause 36 contains what I believe to be a worthwhile new measure on training. The importance of training and retraining to the success of the economy is well understood. At present, expenditure by employers on training for people who are changing jobs is liable to tax as a benefit in kind in the hands of the employee, but increasingly, in a modern economy, job mobility is inevitable and retraining for new skills highly desirable. It is increasingly likely that companies will wish to offer retraining in these circumstances as part of their wider social responsibilities to employees. Clause 36 will make this expenditure on training for a new job or business opportunity free of tax.

A number of clauses are concerned with the collection of corporation tax. The purpose of these measures is to build on the major reform of the corporation tax regime that we introduced in 1984, and to make the collection of the tax simpler, fairer and more effective. Clauses 123 to 133 introduce a new streamlined method of assessment and collection known as pay and file. There has been consultation with the business community about that system and it has been generally welcomed. Because computerisation is required, the new arrangements cannot take effect before the early 1990s. The reason for legislation now is to give taxpayers and their advisers a firm basis on which to plan.

Now that we have brought the main corporation tax rate down from 52 to 35 per cent. we believe that the case for a differential rate on gains is no longer justified. Clause 61 therefore provides for companies' capital gains to be charged at the appropriate corporation tax rate, thus removing the complicated adjustment that is needed under present arrangements. I wish to stress that for small companies that will mean a cut of three percentage points in the rate that is charged on capital gains.

At the same time, we propose that companies should be able to benefit from advance corporation tax set off against their liability to tax on capital gains. That will be of considerable benefit to many companies.

I know that concern has been expressed about the impact of these changes on life assurance companies. The Government considered that issue carefully and, in the end, concluded that it would not be appropriate to make capital gains earned for holders of life assurance policies

an exception. The extension is likely to have a small effect on bonuses of with profits policies, not least because most companies offset management expenses against their capital gains, which are therefore largely sheltered from corporation tax. That is a matter to which we can, and no doubt shall, devote proper attention in Standing Committee.

A further streamlining measure is contained in clause 37 which will rationalise payment dates for corporation tax, bringing all companies on to a nine-month payment basis and removing the scope for a potentially costly abuse.

A major part of the business package in the Finance Bill is, yet again, the measures that are devoted to helping small businesses. Two of those are especially important. First, there are the cut in the basic rate of income tax for unincorporated businesses, including the self-employed, to 27p in the pound, and a similar reduction in the rate of corporation tax for small companies to 27 per cent., which is contained in clause 22. That brings the cumulative reduction in the small companies' corporation rate of tax down by a whole 15p in the pound below the level which we inherited in 1979. As I mentioned earlier, that also means a reduction for such companies of 3p in the pound in the present year in the capital gains tax rate. Secondly, clause 11 provides for cash accounting for VAT which will enable businesses whose annual turnover is less than £¼ million to account for VAT on the basis of cash paid and received. More than half of all traders who are registered for VAT fall into that category, and this will be a significant, beneficial change for them. Cash accounting will overcome the twin VAT problems that are associated with late payment of bills and bad debts. The same clause enables the introduction of annual accounting for these businesses, which will provide a means of assisting cash flow and reducing the form-filling burden. Of course, the turnover ceilings for those businesses are much higher than my right hon. Friend proposed in the original consultation document.

While we are on small business matters, there is also increased retirement relief from capital gains tax in clause 67, which is a further measure to add to the many that we have introduced to make it easier to pass on flourishing family businesses to the next generation.

Also on the subject of VAT, I should record the fact that, as promised in my right hon. Friend's Budget speech, there are no increases in the Finance Bill in indirect taxation, indexed or otherwise, except for very minor items.

This is, perhaps, an appropriate moment to refer to another group of measures in the Bill. Within our continuing programme of tax reduction and reform, it is the Government's policy to eliminate unintended or unjustified tax breaks that cause rates of tax generally to be higher than they would otherwise need to be. We see no justification for asking the majority of taxpayers to subsidise the few who benefit in this way. Clause 12 is the main clause in a package that tightens up the rules on the deduction of VAT input tax as they apply to businesses, and, in particular, groups of associated businesses whose activities are, in part, exempt from VAT. That is designed to prevent distortion of trade and to combat tax avoidance, as the old rules were excessively generous and were being exploited on a growing scale.

The new rules contain generous relief provisions for small businesses. About 2,000 have ceased to be treated as partly exempt. Special arrangements for calculating deductible input tax have been made with individual traders and trade associations to deal with problems that are peculiar to particular industries, such as brewers' tied houses. With these special arrangements included, these measures have generally been accepted as fair and necessary.

Clauses 48 and 49 will prevent companies in multinational groups which enjoy dual residence from securing tax relief twice on one and the same interest payment. Clause 50 ensures that the controlled foreign companies legislation is not side-stepped by moving the residence of the foreign company to the United Kingdom before payment of a dividend.

Clauses 52 and 53 will end the present excessively generous treatment of tax credit relief for foreign withholding tax paid on interest on bank loans. In future, banks will be able to offset this tax credit only against tax on the profit on the relevant loan, and not more widely.

Clause 58, which affects members of Lloyd's syndicates, is designed to bring the tax treatment of their reinsurance to close into line with that of comparable provisions made by insurance companies and other traders. I am well aware that concern has been expressed about the impact of this clause, but the basic point at issue is a simple one: Should the Inland Revenue be able to review Lloyd's reinsurance to close and apply the normal tax criteria for determining what should be deductible for tax purposes? Or must Lloyds figures be accepted without inquiry?

The effect of the present law is that the normal tax criteria do not apply. So reinsurance to close is automatically deductible in full, without review. That puts Lloyd's members in the unique position of being able to determine their own tax liability as far as reinsurance to close is concerned. The purpose of the legislation is merely to ensure that reinsurance to close figures can be examined against the sort of tax criteria that already apply to comparable provisions made by insurance companies and other traders.

Having established the principle, it is very important that the rules should apply equitably in practice. That is why the Chancellor announced in his Budget speech that there would be immediate consultation with Lloyd's. The consultation process is already well under way on a constructive basis. I am sure that this is the best way of achieving a solution which removes the present anomaly but takes account of Lloyd's understandable concerns. Again, that is a matter that we shall no doubt examine in Standing Committee.

Taken together, these measures amount to a significant contribution to a fairer and more effective tax system, and I hope they will receive support from all sides of the House.

Finally, I turn to three sets of primarily personal tax measures. Clauses 69 to 106 will bring about important and far-reaching changes in the pattern of pension provision. They form part of a strategy to widen the coverage of non-state pension provision and give individuals far more flexibility and choice in the way in which they provide for their retirement. They will reduce employees' reliance on the state for their provision in old age and will extend the tax advantages for retirement provision much more widely.

The tax regime for the new personal pension schemes that will be available next January is based on the present retirement annuities provisions, but it incorporates new features that have been widely welcomed. Through clause

[Mr. John MacGregor]

92, it will be possible in future for employees to contract out of state earnings-related pension schemes through a personal pension. Clause 71 enables a much wider range of pension providers to carry on new pension business. Hitherto, insurance companies and certain friendly societies have enjoyed a virtual monopoly of personal pensions business. In future, banks, building societies and unit trusts will be able to enter this market, thus improving the choice that is open to individuals.

Another development that I believe has been welcomed by all is contained in clause 79. It will enable transfer values to be paid into or from a personal pension scheme. This will permit much greater transferability than is now possible between different types of pension arrangements.

Clause 34 and schedule 5 make it possible from next October for members of occupational schemes to make additional voluntary contributions to a pension plan that is completely separate from their employers' scheme up to the tax approval limits in contributions and benefits. Again, this increases the range of choice and independence.

In summary, the pension proposals build on and extend changes made in recent social security legislation and provide a better pension deal for millions of employees.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that some of the pension proposals will benefit from clarification. There are some doubts, especially about pension schemes which were set up before Budget day but which had not been approved by the Superannuation Funds Office on that day. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to provide some clarification because there is considerable confusion within the pension industry about the position of these schemes.

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that the Inland Revenue has recently issued an announcement on this matter that is designed to help the pension industry. This is clearly an issue that we shall be able to debate in full when we consider the Bill in Committee. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury may say a word or two about this when he replies.

The next group of mainly personal measures is contained in clauses 147 to 152, which relate to inheritance tax. I say "mainly personal measures" because they will benefit also many family businesses. The key provision is contained in clause 147, which increases the threshold from £71,000 to £90,000 and simplifies the rate structure from seven rates to four. This has been concentrated rightly on smaller estates, and as a result the number of estates liable to inheritance tax will be cut by roughly a third.

I conclude with by far the most important measure in the Bill, which is the reduction of a further 2p in the basic rate of income tax to 27 per cent. in clause 20. It is by far the most important measure because it affects every taxpayer and because it involves by far the biggest amount of income given back to taxpayers, as I prefer to call it, or revenue forgone, as some technicians do. This measure continues our steady progress towards the goal of a basic rate of not more than 25p in the pound. It underlines the difference between our tax policies and those of the Opposition parties.

Starting from the 33p rate which we inherited in 1979, we are now well over halfway towards our goal. We shall soon reach a basic rate which is equivalent——

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): To 25p as a bottom rate.

Mr. MacGregor: I heard what the hon. Gentleman said. We are halfway towards our goal, and we shall soon have reached a basic rate which is equivalent to the reduced rate band which was introduced by the Labour party when it was in government.

The cumulative effect of the income tax reductions since we took office is substantial. Once again we have designed our income tax proposals to concentrate the benefit on the overwhelming majority of ordinary taxpayers. As we did last year, we have structured the changes so that those with the highest incomes do not benefit disproportionately. I know that the whole House has given a warm welcome to the measures of extra relief for those aged 80 years and over, and for blind people.

The cut in the basic rate improves incentives for nearly everyone whose marginal rate is the basic rate. That is nearly 21 million taxpayers of working age, or 94 per cent. of the total. It is good also for industry, because it offers higher take-home pay without adding a penny to industry's costs. For a married man on average earnings, the rate and allowance changes combined mean nearly £4 a week extra in his pay packet, which is equivalent to a 2·7 per cent. pay increase. As the Government have made clear repeatedly, a key factor in the future performance of the economy and thus the prospect for jobs will be the ability of British industry to keep control of its costs. The Government's success in reducing inflation has substantially reduced the justification for pay increases that are not earned by better performance. This year's income tax reductions provide further help to employers in their efforts to control labour costs.

I note that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said on radio the other day that

"the reduction in the standard rate of income tax is unsustainable".

Let me assure the House and the country that it is and will be perfectly sustainable under our sound economic management. It would be only if the Opposition parties ever had the chance to implement their policies that the tax cuts would immediately go out of the window.

I must admit——

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Over and above the serious balance of payments deficit that we are running up in manufacturing industry, what about the United States' crisis which is approaching, the trade war which is looming, the £117 billion trade deficit of the United States and the £200 billion deficit in its budget? Are not those factors over and above those that the Government are creating, and are they not likely to have some impact on our economy?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening to what I was saying earlier, when I made it clear how strong our economy now is. By pursuing our prudent economic policies we are much better able to withstand any international shocks that might occur. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that an economic crisis would occur in Britain as a result of domestic policies only if the Labour party were able to implement its policies.

I must admit that the position of the Social Democratic party and the Liberal party on income tax cuts is characteristically confused. I believe that they intend to vote against clause 20 but are not necessarily committed to reversing the cut, though they will not pledge themselves never to increase taxation. As usual with them, the voter does not know where he or she would stand. Fortunately, they will never be in a position to cause it to matter.

With the Labour party there are no doubts. It would reverse the tax cut that we have introduced and increase borrowing substantially. That would be the equivalent of a take-home pay cut for the newly qualified staff nurse of £1·56, or £5·32 for a primary school head teacher under the new scales. That would come immediately, but it would be only the beginning. There can be no doubt that with the spending pressures from the Front Bench colleagues beside the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, let alone those of the Left-wingers behind him, he would not be able to contain himself to his initial package.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Where are all the Left-wingers?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall have something to say about that, too. There may be only two in the Chamber now, but there are many more standing for Parliament.

If we had the misfortune to have a future Labour Government and the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook as Chancellor, it would be the same as the early days of the previous Labour Government, only worse. With only a modest number of their spending pledges taken on board, the right hon. Gentleman's Government would impose much higher taxes on everyone than the previous Labour Government. With the full £34 billion of the Labour party's other pledges, which keep popping out of the basket despite all of the right hon. Gentleman's efforts to conceal them, the basic rate of income tax would be doubled, at least. That is a burden that I hope profoundly will never fall upon the British people.

The Labour party let it be known in the press that this Second Reading would be the great launch of its attack on the Government, so where are Labour Members? Their almost total absence suggests that they have little confidence or interest in their attack, and I am not surprised as it is such a flimsy one.

The Bill demonstrates the difference between the parties on tax policies and it contains a range of new proposals to encourage enterprise, efficiency and flexibility that will improve further the prospects for output and jobs. It will consolidate and extend the programme of reform that we have followed successfully since 1979, a programme which has contributed in no small measure to the present vigour of the economy, which is now entering its seventh year of steady growth. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.50 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The Finance Bill presents the House and the country with a puzzle. It is a puzzle that is no easier for us to resolve as a consequence of listening to the Chief Secretary's speech.

As the right hon. Gentleman pointed out, the Bill has a certain bulk, containing 22 schedules and 164 clauses; however, it has little by way of substance. It is almost as if it had been drafted by Ministers in relation to an economy that existed only in their imaginations. In that imaginary economy, very little needs to be done. It is on a wonderfully serene course, requiring only the odd deft touch on the tiller—a small adjustment to VAT here, a few consequential changes to the personal pension schemes there and a little encouragement to profit-related earnings somewhere else.

The only point of substance — the Chief Secretary conceded that it was the major point of substance—is the modest tax offering that the Bill places before the electorate. Even that is treated in a slightly odd way, as though it had nothing to do with the economy or its needs. It is treated simply as an unconvenanted benefit, a little bonus distributed as if it were a dividend in relation to an economy whose needs are assumed to have been fully met, the only problem being to decide how to spend the money.

The peculiarity — the puzzle — is that the Bill, the Chief Secretary's speech and virtually every pronouncement by Ministers bear no relationship whatever to the reality that we face, or to the real needs of our economy. Far from heading serenely on automatic pilot out towards the open seas, our economy, as any objective perusal of the statistics will show, foundered on the rocks when the Conservative party took office in 1979. There is absolutely no sign yet of it floating free. But Ministers seem scarcely to know, still less to care, about what is really happening to the economy. All that concerns them is what is happening politically: the imminence of a general election dominates their thinking. That is why, as the Bill and Ministers' speeches have shown, the only concern that bothers them is that nothing should be allowed to disturb the illusion of serenity that they have tried so hard to foster.

Yet the people know differently. The reason that they know differently is that the harsh experience of their daily lives directly contradicts the glossy picture painted by Government propagandists. People in our society, when they read the statements and the speeches, watch the television broadcasts and listen to the propaganda, must ask themselves, "Are we going mad? This is not the economy in which we live, or the society that we have to endure. Our daily experience is quite different." I say to them, "It is you who are right, and the Government's propaganda that is wrong."

The daily experience of virtually every family in the country is very different from that propaganda. There can be scarcely a family in the country that does not know, or even include, someone who is unemployed—perhaps a school leaver unemployed since having school 18 months or two years ago. There can be scarcely a family that does not include someone who has been waiting on a hospital waiting list, perhaps for a hip operation, for the past 18 months. There can be scarcely a family that does not know of someone living in dilapidated housing or bed-and-breakfast accommodation; scarcely a family that does not include a grandparent, a pensioner struggling to make ends meet and to keep warm in the winter; scarcely a family that does not know of school children having to share textbooks, and working in run-down, worn-out schools.

That is the reality of living in Britain today — a reality that is not reflected in Government propaganda, but which people know well from their own lives. Their view of that harsh reality is infinitely more accurate and deeply felt than anything that can be said from the Government Dispatch Box.

It is also the reality of an economy crying out for resources to be spent where they are desperately needed.

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

I invite Conservative Members not to take my word for it, but to look to the myriad authorities—many of them well disposed towards the Government and the Conservative party—that have made similar claims, repeatedly, over a long period.

The economy is crying out for resources to be spent on, for instance, training. My authority for saying that—apart from the circumstances in which we so obviously find ourselves—is a news release published as recently as yesterday by the CBI. A CBI survey showed that, at a time when at least 3 million people—probably nearer 4 million—are out of work, one in five British manufacturers maintain that skill shortages will prevent them from increasing their output or investment. That point was made not by the Labour party, but by the CBI. Its new director general makes the point starkly:

"Japan has been training proportionately eight times as many graduate engineers as the UK in recent years."

That is the indisputable reality. We see the consequences in our puny attempts to resist the power of the Japanese economy when we get into trading difficulties with Japan.

In the same CBI press release, Mr. Bryan Nicholson, the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, said:

"This survey once again shows up the skills gap that exists in this country. It is vital that our workforce is trained in the appropriate skills and to the appropriate level so that every firm can work to its maximum capacity."

That point was made by someone who is, in many ways, the Government's own man.

Our economy is crying out for resources to be spent on training and housing, as every independent survey will confirm, and also on research and development. Virtually the whole of the British scientific community has made it clear that we are running down our spending at our peril, and mortgaging our future. As long ago as 1984, in its publication "The Fabric of the Nation", the CBI made it clear that the economy was crying out for spending on our industrial infrastructure. In the National Health Service, beds and wards are being closed, and nurses are forced to go abroad to obtain decently-paid jobs. Tremendous difficulty and chaos are being created in our schools: teachers' morale has been sapped by low pay and the removal of their negotiating rights.

That reality is not merely anecdotal; it does not rest on the considered views of so many outside and independent bodies. It is borne out by statistics—not, I hasten to add, those that the Chief Secretary gave us, but the simple, central, important statistics. It is a sad and familiar litany, and I apologise for having to weary the House with it again. Manufacturing output is still 4 or 5 per cent. below its 1979 level. The Chief Secretary made great play of the tremendous volume of equity that is being raised, but precious little is going into manufacturing industry. Manufacturing investment is still 20 per cent. lower than when the Government took office. The right hon. Gentleman boasted of the trading figures for the past two months; let us see what his feelings are as the year progresses. Is he telling us that his forecast of a deficit of £8 billion in trade and manufactures is now out of the window, like so many other Government forecasts? Has it been abandoned, or is it still an accurate forecast on which we are entitled to base ourselves?

The Chief Secretary sometimes deploys productivity and rate of growth figures. I asked the Chancellor recently when the 1980s began, because we are constantly being told that throughout the 1980s our performance has been very much better than that of any other country. The Chancellor gave the expected reply that the 1980s began in 1980, so I then took the interesting step of tabling a question to the Chancellor in which I asked him for comparative rates of growth in general terms and in manufacturing industry since 1980. Far from the Government's grandiose claims about Britain heading the growth league, we find that by comparison with other G7 countries we rank fourth in overall growth and fifth in manufacturing output growth. Even on the figures that the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary choose to use, there is deception at the heart of those figures.

If that is the real state of the economy, why is the Finance Bill so lamentably inadequate and irrelevant to the needs of the economy? The answer is a combination of incompetence, cynicism and self-delusion by the Government. It is partly a matter of incompetence because, frankly, the Government do not know where they are going. The ship of the economy has foundered on the rocks and the Chancellor has no idea of the direction in which he is now trying to take it.

Let me substantiate that claim, because I see that the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary are inclined to laugh it off. Unless my ears deceived me, money supply—the lodestar of the Government's economic policy—was not mentioned by the Chief Secretary. It has disappeared from view. It is no longer relevant or significant in any respect. In today's *Financial Times*, Mr. Tim Congdon of Messels, one of the remaining high priests of monetarism to whom the Chancellor used to lend a very ready ear, warns, presumably on the basis of the old monetarist religion, that interest rates will have to rise.

The Chancellor may say that that is all rubbish and monetarist mumbo-jumbo. I agree with him, but I wonder whether he is prepared to be quite so direct in rejecting the doctrines to which he attached so much importance only two years ago. If he is not prepared to accept Mr. Tim Congdon's view of interest rates and if he is still prepared to say that the Budget strategy is designed to bring interest rates substantially down, I wonder whether he still says that the prospect is that interest rates will come down.

For example, has the Chancellor looked at international trade and at the international economy? Has he looked at what is happening to currencies and interest rates around the world? Is he prepared to say that interest rates are on the way down? If he is, I suggest that he would be disbelieved by almost everybody who takes an interest in these matters. I try this regularly but I never get a taker. If the Chancellor would care to rise to his feet and tell us that interest rates are on the way down, I am sure that that would be regarded by the City as extremely interesting news.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: Of course the Chancellor will not do that. Perhaps the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) will offer that assurance, but he will do so, I suggest, with less authority.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman says that the provisions of the Finance Bill are irrelevant to the problems that he believes the British economy faces, but most of his solutions seem to involve increased public expenditure. The Finance Bill has nothing to do with that.

Apart from providing the revenue, is he prepared to say that the £34 billion to which my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary referred would be financed by increased taxation or by increased borrowing?

Mr. Gould: I ought to have learnt by now that it is not wise to give way to ridiculous interventions. This is a debate on the Government's Finance Bill. I well understand the anxiety to divert attention to other matters, but when we have the opportunity to deploy again our extremely practicable and well worked out programme for reducing unemployment by 1 million in two years and for making a major attack on family poverty and poverty among the elderly, I shall be delighted to give the statistics for which the hon. Gentleman asks. But for the time being, much as Conservative Members may regret it, we are debating the Government's Finance Bill.

I was making the point that the Finance Bill has abandoned all mention of monetarism. The new lodestar is the public sector borrowing requirement. That is to be the guiding principle according to which our economy is to be steered. Perhaps not surprisingly, however, the Government have had extreme difficulty in discovering what is happening to the public sector borrowing requirement. As to their forecast about the PSBR for 1986-87, in the 1986 Red Book we were told solemnly that the PSBR would be £7·1 billion. A year later, in the 1987 Red Book, we were told that it would be £4·1 billion. In the event, it was £3·3 billion, less than half the original forecast. I do not blame the Government for getting it wrong, but it demonstrates how useless a measure the PSBR has become.

In case the Government wish to congratulate themselves on having reduced the PSBR, let me make it clear that the Government can claim very little credit, because they do not understand how it happened. The major reason for the difference between the Government's original forecast and the actual outturn is accounted for in the Red Book by a mysterious item called "Miscellaneous Financial Transactions", which account for between £2 billion and £3 billion. "Miscellaneous Financial Transactions" is a very nice, round phrase, but I do not believe that Ministers have the slightest idea what it means. Therefore, they are as puzzled as everybody else about precisely what happens to the PSBR and how much reliance can be placed on it.

However, the Red Book makes one point that the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor have studiously ignored in their public pronouncements: that it is not the PSBR that is causing the problems; it is the explosion in private sector borrowing, as the Red Book makes clear, that is creating the major upward pressure on interest rates. On that subject, however—I assume for ideological reasons and prejudice — we hear not a word. I say "ideological" reasons, but I ought to add cynicism, too, because the one thing that the Government cannot do is to try to rein in the consumer boom on which they have pinned their election hopes. The one thing to which they will not admit and which they cannot be seen to admit is that the consumer boom is inherently unstable and unsustainable. That is the reality that is revealed not by ministerial speeches but by the Red Book.

Self-delusion comes into play as well. The Government have worked so hard and for so long to delude the electorate that now they have succeeded in deluding themselves. Government propaganda has been telling us month after month that soon we shall reach those halcyon days when only 3 million people will be unemployed. The flags are waving, the bands are playing, the cheering has begun. "At 3 million we shall proclaim", say the Government, "an enormous triumph." But is that a triumph?

In any other country and in any other period of our history 3 million unemployed, with all the appalling waste and misery that lie behind that figure, would be regarded as a badge of shame. Only the Government, only the Conservative party, dare to lay that before the British people and claim it as a triumph, yet that is the essence of the Government's belief that the economy is on course: that they will reach 3 million — even if one gives credence to that figure — and thereby defuse the unemployment issue.

However, the figure of 3 million unemployed is a facade, a charade, a farce. Although that figure may be massaged downwards, what I call the unemployment gap is rising. By "the unemployment gap" I mean all those people who want to work but who, for one reason or another or by one means or another, do not show up in the official statistics. These are the people who have been fiddled off the register by statistical changes, or who have been shuffled out into make-work schemes, or who have been frightened off the register and therefore cannot claim benefit. These people have been told that they need not register or that they may not register, or they have been encouraged not to register. That figure is increasing and the unemployment gap is widening. That is the reality behind the Government's illusory unemployment total.

There is, of course, another important statistic to be considered in this debate. Whatever happens to the figure this year — whether it is just above or just below 3 million or, more realistically, approaching 4 million—on the Government's figures we have during their period of office lost no fewer than 21 million working years through unemployment. That means that virtually the whole labour contribution over a whole year of the whole British work force has been lost during the eight years of this Government's period of office. It is a shameful waste of human resources and national output.

It is no wonder that we say with justice that unemployment, while being a cruel burden for those who suffer it, also makes the whole country poorer. It is because we deliberately turn our backs on the unemployed and the lost national wealth that they represent that we are a failing economy — something that the Government choose to try to ignore.

It is significant that the Chief Secretary made only one glancing reference to unemployment. He could scarcely bring himself to address the subject. Once again, I pray in aid the CBI—this is not my forecast—which in the last day has published a survey showing that 750,000 jobs in our industry have yet to be lost. That is the reality of present policies. Unemployment is not coming down. The figures may be coming down, but the numbers of jobless are increasing, and their desperation is increasing too.

The Finance Bill contains no sign that any of this is of concern to Ministers. The Government's only concern is to try to bribe the electorate with its own money. Yet even on the one central issue of tax cuts, a deception lies at the heart of the Government's position. We are told that this is all part of a wonderful strategy to make good the Government's claim to be a tax-cutting Government. However, even if we take into account the 2p cut in income

[Mr. Gould]

tax in the Budget and generously set aside the doubling of VAT which began the Government's period of office, we see that the burden of tax for most ordinary people—the proportion, the sum that they pay by way of direct tax——

Mr. Tim Smith: What about the proportion?

Mr. Gould: Yes, the proportion is the same. The hon. Gentleman must be patient. I have all the figures, and I shall give that figure in a moment.

For an ordinary family on half average earnings, taxes on income have risen by £5 a week in real terms since 1978. For a family of the same composition on average earnings, taxes on income have risen by £1·60 per week. Even for households on 1·5 times average earnings, taxes on income have increased by 35p a week. Even on the most favourable analysis—taking into account only taxes on income and bearing in mind the Government's tax cuts—all those families are paying more in tax than they were when the Government took office.

If we consider the overall tax position and take VAT into account, we find that matters are far, far worse. In that case, a family on average earnings is paying £6·36 more per week in tax. Even a family on 1·5 times average earnings is paying £6·82 extra per week. So much for the Government's claim to be a tax-cutting Government: like so many of the Government's claims and assertions, it simply does not stand up to analysis.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I gave way to the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) earlier and my experience does not incline me to give way to his hon. Friend.

Let me answer the question posed by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield. Taking the country as a whole, the burden of tax has risen as a proportion of gross national product from 37·4 per cent. in 1978 to 40·4 per cent. in the last year for which figures are available. That is what has happened to our economy.

None of this takes into account the tax changes that we know are in the pipeline but do not appear in the Finance Bill. We know about those changes because we have constantly challenged Treasury Ministers both in correspondence and in the House to deny that they have in mind and in place proposals to increase the scope and the rate of VAT if they win the election. We have been reminded on many occasions that that is the Government's long-term strategy. Indeed, the Paymaster General, who is not here today, conceded to me in a television interview a month or two ago that that is the Government's objective. The Chancellor's former Cabinet colleague Lord Cockfield, an EEC Commissioner, is busy completing the internal market with all that that implies for the harmonisation of VAT and therefore the extension of VAT across the whole range of family spending. We must also consider the Chancellor's interest in joining the European monetary system with all that that implies for the co-ordination and harmonisation of monetary and fiscal policies.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way again.

There are two further pieces of evidence, the first of which is the now notorious statement by the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor's predecessor, before the 1979 election. He made the famous statement—the notorious statement, as I prefer to put it—

"We have no intention of doubling VAT."

We know that in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's first Budget he increased VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend the Shadow Chancellor and I have constantly challenged Ministers to deny reports that work has been done in the Treasury on the extension of VAT. Recently I received a reply from a Treasury Minister in which all sorts of weasel words and wriggling around were deployed to avoid answering the central question, "Is work being done, or has work been done on proposals to extend VAT?" We get no answer to that question.

On that basis my right hon. Friend and I—indeed, the whole Labour party—will be campaigning, and warning the electorate that the election of a Conservative Government will mean the extension of VAT to food, fuel, new housing, all clothing and even funerals.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] If the Chancellor wishes to dispute that, let him say now. If he does not, we shall make sure that the British people understand what is in store for them. We shall draw the parallel between what the Government are failing to say now and what the right hon. and learned Gentleman who is now Foreign Secretary said as Chancellor in 1979 and the action that he took immediately after winning the general election.

This Finance Bill is irrelevant to the needs of the economy. It is a sham that owes everything to the imminent election and nothing at all to what the economy desperately needs. Labour Members are clear as to what the alternative should be. We know what should have been done with the resources. We should be rebuilding our infrastructure, the skills of our people, our shattered industrial base and our economic future. None of those aims makes even a token appearance in the Finance Bill. The Bill is irresponsible. It offers no hope to the unemployed or to those who suffer from impoverishment and lost national output, and nothing constructive for the future. It is because the Bill does nothing to build our future that we shall vote against it tonight.

5.18 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): The Budget day proposals of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor were widely welcomed as responsible and prudent. As I pointed out in the Budget debates, it is difficult to envisage how deflationary his proposals would have had to be for them not to be regarded by the Opposition as electioneering. They embody a sensible approach which is consistent with the maintenance of the improvement in our economic indicators which has occurred over a considerable period.

I had the greatest difficulty in reconciling what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said with the general experience of the vast majority of people in not only the south but other parts of the country. But, as he rightly said, there is a continuing unemployment problem. It is extraordinary that many of those who have commented on the Budget—not only the Opposition but people outside—have said, "The Budget does nothing for the unemployed." It is clear that the proposals for cutting taxation, not least for reducing the rate of income tax, help

employment. That means greater spending power. Therefore, when people buy goods, it is likely that employment will increase.

More important, the Budget and the Finance Bill must be seen in the context of other public expenditure and borrowing proposals. Two or three years ago, some said, "Why do we not spend more on infrastructure, for example, rather than tax cuts?" In the last autumn statement and public expenditure White Paper, the Government significantly increased expenditure in a number of crucial respects, and that will help to alleviate unemployment. The combination of the reductions in taxation, the increases in public expenditure and the reductions in borrowing—this will enable interest rates to come down, which will increase the level of investment, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said—will help to reduce unemployment.

We must analyse the reasons for unemployment. I apologise for repeating what I have said previously, but the reality is that in the past there was gross overmanning. The reduction in employment, the increase in unemployment, and the subsequent increase in productivity all reflected the elimination of that overmanning. Some jobs were not really there. We are faced with a tremendously difficult problem. The country now has to generate jobs to employ those people who were previously in industry, which was overmanned. There cannot be rapid progress. But the measures in the Finance Bill, combined with the public expenditure programme and reduction in borrowing, mean that we are now on a steady course and that there should be a reduction in unemployment.

The Government have introduced a number of other measures to alleviate the problem in the meantime, and the underlying trend is significantly better than it has been. Demographic factors are now moving in a more favourable direction. Previously, there was an increase in employment and an increase in unemployment at the same time because the labour force was increasing. For all those reasons, real progress is being made on the unemployment front. The Finance Bill will contribute to further improvements.

There is common concern on both sides of the House about the unemployed, as for the rest of the economy. Undoubtedly, standards for those in employment have been improving for a considerable time. I had the greatest difficulty in recognising the gloomy picture painted by the hon. Member for Dagenham.

Mr. Gould: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Higgins: Of course I shall give way.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I have way once. The right hon. Gentleman seems to have difficulty in understanding the point which I was making. Even those in work are very much dependent on the level of services available to them. The examples which I gave related to the services that they had received from the National Health Service, the state school system or the housing provision. I think that the right hon. Gentleman will concede that, in all those respects, the points which I made had substantial merit and accuracy. Many families, even those in work, have suffered because of the rundown in those services.

Mr. Higgins: With the greatest respect, I totally disagree with what the hon. Gentleman has said about expenditure on the Health Service. We know about the substantial rise in real expenditure on the Health Service, which was further augmented by the proposals in the autumn statement. As for education, one can look at the size of classes, expenditure per pupil and so on. In overall terms, I do not recognise the hon. Gentleman's description. On the contrary, the position has been improving significantly over a considerable period.

The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee was under tremendous pressure because the recess occurred largely before Easter rather than after and the Committee had only a few days between concluding taking evidence and compiling the report. Traditionaly, the Committee does not normally deal with measures in the Finance Bill, leaving them to the detailed analysis undertaken in Standing Committee. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said that some clauses would be considered in Standing Committee. With the possible exception of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) —I am not sure about my right hon. Friend the Chancellor—I have probably served on more Finance Bill Standing Committees than any other hon. Member. It is unlikely, I hope, that I shall find myself on the Standing Committee this year.

I wish to return to one point that I raised during the Budget debates. The proposals in clause 62—on the taxation of the capital gains of insurance companies as income—give cause for concern. The House has always set its face against retrospection. I must declare an interest because I have some with-profits insurance policies—as, I dare say, do many other hon. Members. This measure will affect the position of those who have such policies and who may have reasonable expectations of the eventual value or the surrender value of their policy. They may even have asked their assurance company to assess that value.

I was not convinced by the statement by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that there is no great problem because companies, to a considerable extent, write off their expenses against their capital gains. That may or may not be the case, but an increase in the rate of tax imposed on those companies must mean that the resources which they eventually have available for distribution, especially in terminal bonuses, will be reduced. I hope that, before the Bill is considered in Standing Committee, my right hon. Friend will consider whether this is appropriate.

I understand my right hon. Friend's point about consistency between clauses 61 and 62. Clause 61 is concerned with companies' capital gains, which are vastly different from the gains made by insurance companies, which are subsequently distributed to policyholders who have invested their savings with that company. The two are not the same. That is why, in the past, the legislation has differentiated between the capital gains of insurance companies and other companies' capital gains. I hope that that aspect will be considered, not least because I gather that there are substantial differences of opinion about the revenue involved. I think that the Government estimate that it is about £30 million and that some outside groups have suggested that it may be as high as £100 million.

On value added tax, I welcome the proposals in the Finance Bill to change to a cash accounting system and the relief that that will give to companies facing bad debts. It is extraordinary that the Opposition have had to resort to a scare campaign about the imposition of VAT on items such as food, fuel and housing. I am naturaly prejudiced on this issue, because I had the doubtful pleasure of

[Mr. Higgins]

steering, or perhaps fighting, the original VAT legislation through the House. There were good reasons why reliefs were given. In a recent report entitled "The Defence of VAT Zero-Rating," the Select Committee pointed out the importance of defending in the courts the existing derogations for a narrow range of items. I am glad to say that the Government are clearly doing that. In an earlier report, the Select Committee pointed out that the existing zero rating is not relevant to harmonisation of the internal market. The Committee put forward overwhelming arguments in its report.

It is sad that Lord Cockfield, who, in some ways, was instrumental in instituting some aspects of the present value added tax, should now seem to have changed from gamekeeper to poacher. I hope that the Government will do everything possible to resist that trend. If we are to harmonise at all, it is much more sensible to harmonise on our existing form of tax with a single positive rate, for example, and zero rating on essential items rather than the much more complicated and unjustified taxes that exist in many Common Market countries. It is completely wrong for the Opposition to start a scare campaign.

I shall say a few words about two points that are raised in the Treasury Select Committee report. In particular, I refer to monetary policy and what the Government and the Bank of England have described as the overhanging glacier of liquidity. It is a cause for concern. The reality is that, in many respects, the Government's present monetary policy is much closer to what I suppose Professor Milton Friedman would have described as a real monetary policy than to what was the case when the Government first came to power. The Chancellor has been successful in reducing the level of public sector borrowing.

The Committee felt some concern about the efficiency of using short-term interest rates to deal with credit expansion and, in particular, consumer credit. I hope that the Government will pay attention to that matter and consider whether it is appropriate to spell out, in rather more detail than the Committee was able to get in evidence, the overall policy with regard to control of credit and monetary policy generally, given that the measure of sterling M3 has been abandoned and the extent to which sterling M0 is a lead indicator is, to say the least, open to great doubt.

The other point upon which the Committee concentrated is the Louvre accord on international monetary affairs. I hope that the situation can be clarified. The Committee sought, with difficulty, to establish whether the Government are seeking to maintain any range of exchange rates. As we pointed out in the report, the lack of explicit exchange rate bands means that we are giving up some advantages that we would enjoy if we were to join the European exchange rate mechanism. If indeed the accord that is said to have been reached does not include any specific trigger levels for particular currencies or in certain circumstances, it is difficult, particularly in the context of the present controversy with Japan, to determine how such a system can effectively operate. I shall not burden the House with the arguments that we put forward. The Government have yet to make entirely clear the proposals that they reached with the various participants in the accord. Greater clarification will assist the operation of international finance markets.

The economic forecasts attached to the report, which include those conducted by independent forecasters and those based on their common assumptions, show a satisfactory picture of economic growth, which, as my right hon. Friend pointed out, has been sustained for a considerable time, and of the retail price index and even the balance of payments. As the Committee report points out, we believe that the balance of payments side of things may be pessimistic rather than optimistic.

Overall, the Finance Bill is relevant to the problems of the unemployed, the future prosperity of the country and, above all, sets a course that can be maintained for further improvement in our economic affairs.

5.34 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) mentioned a value added tax scare campaign. Of course, we all know that value added tax is the subject of the European Commission's decision to push the matter forward as fast as it can. Of course, even if it were successful in doing that, it would not be the end of the matter. There would still be a distortion of competition—or so it would claim—in excise duties and even in personal and corporation tax. It is bound to fail in such matters if it tries to take the matter to anything like a logical conclusion. The harmonisation of taxes may come. If it does, it will be shortly before we harmonise the languages of the Community.

I disagree a little with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The Chancellor of the Exchequer has not failed in his Budget. He has succeeded. It was not his task to lay the foundations for the nation's prosperity. His task was to deliver to the Prime Minister what she required—a good pre-election Budget for a Conservative Government hoping to be re-elected. Most important of all, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has provided flexibility in the choice of the date of the next election. It could go on even for the next 12 months, so flexible are the arrangements provided by the Finance Bill and the Budget. The Chancellor has done that by quietening the foreign exchange markets. He has arranged matters so that interest rates, if not coming down, should be on a downward trend. He succeeded in maintaining some spending in the economy — excessive spending — with several tax reliefs that will keep his party satisfied if not deliriously happy. It has been a clever but not over-clever Budget. The Prime Minister could not ask for more.

If we raise our eyes a little we shall see that it offers little long-term hope for manufacturing industry, and nothing for the regions of our country. We seem to have forgotten the regions in our Finance Bill and Budget. Years ago, they were the prime aspects of Budgets. How can we deal with the problems faced by the parts of our country that are not being successfully run at present? That matter has been forgotten. It finds no place in discussions—more's the pity—and so the suffering goes on. There is nothing in the Finance Bill for the deprived and nothing to end the divisions between the rich and the poor and the north and the south. In the pre-election excitement, that will be lost. It will be remembered when the voting figures are counted and we must turn again to economic realities.

Two matters are omitted from the Finance Bill. They used to find a regular place in the Finance Bills introduced by the previous Labour Government. Each came about as a result of the activities of one hon. Member, who was then an Opposition Whip. He introduced the novelty of a Whip

who spoke more frequently and for longer than most of his colleagues. Hon. Members will know that I speak of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. The debates on the Finance Bills of the Labour Government were substantially dominated by the Rooker-Wise amendments. The alliance between my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and Audrey Wise, together with the then Opposition Whip the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, led to indexation of personal allowances.

That amendment found its way into legislation and became part of all subsequent Finance Bills. That was quite right. It was taxation by stealth. The Chancellor of the Exchequer used to call it "Truth in taxation". I must concede that that term is a bit too grand for my taste, but in inflationary periods there is a special need to increase thresholds. A number of people come out of taxation at the time of all Budgets, there is a great hullaballoo, and they are in it again the next year. It used to be called fiscal lag. We do not seem to use that term too much these days. That happens even when income tax thresholds are raised in line with inflation.

What is worse is that, when thresholds are not increased in line with inflation, the so-called generous Chancellor is not generous at all and increases taxation. The then Whip started his campaign to tell the truth about these matters. He made much of the failure to revalorise personal allowances, which was his major campaign during the time of the Labour Government. But the failure to revalorise personal allowances is the mirror image of the failure to revalorise excise duties. In the Finance Bill he has failed to revalorise excise duties.

We have a Chancellor brought to his judgment. His past derides his present—his present actions are mocked by his past. An earlier Chancellor of the Exchequer failed to index personal allowances in order to increase his revenue. This Chancellor condemns that action, yet he fails to increase the excise duties. He does that for one reason—to manipulate the retail prices index—and it is that manipulation that I oppose. We have to ask ourselves which is the more heinous offence—to fail to index to increase revenue or to fail to index in order to manoeuvre the retail prices index? That is the price we pay for too close attention to the RPI.

At one time the Government believed that inflation was not caused by the cost of living. They believed it was caused by the money supply. They were so convinced of that quackery that they increased VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent. in the belief that it would not affect inflation. Of course, it did and inflation leapt to over 20 per cent. The policy continued unchanged and the country has paid a high price for the education of the Government.

A high inflation rate was followed by what the Leader of the House has called the three years of unparalleled austerity. That was bad enough, but it differed in its effects throughout the country. It impinged lightly on the south-east and wreaked devastation not just in the towns with old industries but in places such as Ashton-under-Lyne, Droylsden and Mossley in my constituency, where small firms have thrived for generations and where people had earned their living making things, using their skills to manufacture articles for the home market and abroad. The trouble with the three years of needless, as well as unparalleled austerity, is that it closed so many firms which ought not to have closed and it closed them in my towns.

It is no use blaming councils. In Tameside we have a most responsible local authority. Last week I and my Tameside colleagues my hon. Friends the Members for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) met industrialists in the town. Those industrialists are rather different from the sort one gets in the Confederation of British Industry. They are concerned mainly with small industries, making things and earning their living providing prosperity for the towns in which they live. They appreciate the good sense of the Tameside council.

They know, to the surprise of many, that Tameside council has a public accounts committee of its own to ensure that it gets value for money. It sent a delegation to the Select Committee to learn how to provide itself with some of the skills necessary to satisfy itself of the probity and correctness of its spending decisions. Therefore, do not let us hear too much about local authorities and the damage they do. They are assisting the economic regeneration of many parts of the country.

Many years too late, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has come to realise that inflation is not caused by the money supply after all. He has discovered that it is, sadly, a little more complicated than that. He has discovered, in the final years of the 20th century, that it is caused by such old-fashioned notions as demand in the economy, the level of manufacturing capacity, pay settlements, the exchange rate, investment and boring things such as that. The danger is that the Chancellor, with his new-found interest in and concern for the retail prices index, may become too enamoured of the scope for trickery and deception that it presents.

Chile, long before the years of Pinochet and Allende, depended heavily on the RPI as a measure of inflation, which it naturally wished to reduce. Chile has the longest record of inflation of any country in the world. It had inflation going back to the 1880s. Years ago, wage settlements took place in January of each year. That may still happen; I do not know. Therefore, every December large quantities of cheap imported potatoes were brought into a country that was self-sufficient in potatoes and depended heavily upon them for the diet of the people. That depressed the cost of living index and wage settlements were moderated. That was the theory. It worked for a while but it did not last because the trade unions eventually constructed their own version of the retail price index. So the Chancellor of the Exchequer should beware of playing those tricks with the cost of living index. If I may say so, he has his reputation to consider.

The second omission from the Finance Bill deals with mortgage relief. It was here that in 1976 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, again in his erstwhile position of the talkative Whip, moved an amendment to include the level of mortgage relief as an annual item which, from then on, had to appear as a new clause in every Finance Bill. Consequently, that could be debated and was debated each year, usually at some length. Accommodating as Treasury Ministers then used to be, they accepted the amendment and so it stayed until the present Chancellor of the Exchequer moved into the Treasury and scrapped the whole business.

The House knows the nonsense of mortgage relief. It knows how it pushes up the cost of houses and encourages home owners to use their spare cash in trading up rather than investing in industry. It knows how so much of the

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

money leaks into other areas of expenditure, much of it consumer expenditure, and how the rise in house prices increases collateral and expands the availability of credit. We also know the difference of opinion on this matter between the Chancellor and the Prime Minister.

The Chancellor has learned. He is now on the side of those who realise the dangers of mortgage relief for its impact on house prices as well as for its assault on the principle of fiscal neutrality, to which I believe he is still wedded. The trouble is that, although he has learned, he has done nothing to halt the rise and the cost of mortgage relief now amounts to around £5 billion a year. I notice that he did not refer to that once during his Budget statement. That is rather surprising considering the importance of it. However, I think that it is perhaps a sign of a feeling of guilt and an acceptance that he was not able to get the agreement of the Prime Minister.

There are two other omissions from the Finance Bill. One is from part III, which deals with stamp duty. I expected that at some stage during his period of office the Chancellor of the Exchequer would enjoy himself and abolish stamp duty or at least bring it down further than he has done. I also thought, dealing with part II of the Bill, that he would try to abolish capital gains tax.

The Chancellor has so emasculated capital gains tax that very little of it remains. That is a pity, because there was a coherence between corporation tax, capital transfer tax, and capital gains tax which has now been destroyed by the Government. A Labour Government will need to replace that trinity of taxes with something equally consistent. It is sad that the Labour Government will not have the expertise and dedication of the late Lord Kaldor to help them, but a unifying system such as that which he might have devised will be needed to deal with the taxation of wealth and inheritance.

I am not a close friend of the strange tax of stamp duty, but nor am I the enemy of it that I believe the Chancellor to be. It has been a substantial and economical raiser of revenue. Because of recent changes, it does not occupy the same position today and I had expected it to be on the Chancellor's execution list or at least to be something about which he would have taken action.

I have always been unhappy about the way in which we have taxed oil. We were late in coming to it and we have taken very little notice of the need to ensure that a depletions policy is part of the Government's essential policies in dealing with our energy supplies. That tax has been absorbed into the revenue aspect of Government. They have had vast sums of money which have enabled them to carry out the economic policies they pursue. However, it is not just the revenue but the balance of payments, because even when oil is quite cheap and drops substantially in price it is still saving us an enormous amount in balance of payments. In the period since the last war, in fact almost the whole of the century, certainly from the first world war, balance of payments difficulties have bedevilled the whole economy. Those difficulties have been the basis of stop-go and of some of the most agonising decisions that Chancellors have had to face. Suddenly, at a stroke, all those difficulties disappeared. Any success rests on the backs of those oil wells in the North sea. The major constraint that has now been removed has been an enormous advantage to all those who have taken the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer since 1979.

I note that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report considered that the oil price assumption was modest and that the PSBR figure of £4 billion was an overestimate. I agree with that. In passing, I must state that I have great respect for the right hon. Member for Worthing. However, it is sad that there were eight Divisions during the Select Committee proceedings. I know that it is hard to achieve a united Committee as we approach the general election, but if the Committee is divided, it will not carry the same weight. I hope that all those concerned are more aware of that now and I hope that they are aware that they may have to steer clear of certain subjects during this rather difficult period.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury spoke again and again about success, the strength of the economy and the wonderful position of this country. Had we had genuine proof of the success, I suspect that we would have had a different Finance Bill before us today. The Bill and the Budget are inadequate to meet the problems that lie ahead and they cast severe doubt on the success claimed by the Chief Secretary.

5.51 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is not present to hear my comments. It was rather uncharacteristic of the hon. Gentleman to claim that the Finance Bill was, among other things, irrelevant to some of the real needs of the nation. One of the points that he instanced when making that charge was the important area—and hon. Members on both sides of the House would agree that this was important—of industrial training and retraining, where quite clearly the contribution in this country of the public and private sectors has for a long time been inadequate. The hon. Member for Dagenham should have paid attention to the small but useful clause—clause 36—to which my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred. That clause relates to the relief of the costs of training for private sector employers who carry out more of the training which the country so badly needs. In that respect, if not in many others, the hon. Member for Dagenham's speech fell below the needs of the occasion.

Last year I spoke in the equivalent Second Reading debate on the Finance Bill and gave a particular welcome to two aspects of what later became the Finance Act 1986. I welcome the cut in the standard rate of income tax to 29p in the pound and the package of tax reliefs for charities and charitable giving.

This year, I want to give a particular welcome to the cut in the basic rate of income tax to 27p in the pound. At that level, we shall not be far from the Chancellor's objective of 25p in the pound. I hope very much that the basic rate of income tax can be cut further in future. However, as the figures set out in clause 20 of the Bill show, the tax changes in income tax—welcome though they are—leave us more urgently than ever in need of fundamental tax reform to lower still further the initial rate of income tax—the point at which someone enters income tax. Secondly, we must lower further the top rates of income tax, especially when we consider the international position. Our top rates rise to 60 per cent. in the pound and they are still

significantly higher than those of many of our competitors. Thirdly, and most important, there is a need to smooth the gradient in income tax.

As right hon. and hon. Members who study these matters will have noticed from clause 20, it is striking that there are now two "cliffs"—as I believe that they are called in the jargon—in the income tax structure. In other words, someone moves from paying no income tax, beneath the income tax threshold, directly into tax at 27p in the pound—at least that will be the case if the measure becomes law later in the year. That person may then move again up a "cliff" of 13 per cent. to the next rate of 40 per cent. to level off thereafter at 45, 50, 55 and 60 per cent.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Plus national insurance.

Mr. Forman: If I had a graph or a blackboard I could illustrate my point more clearly. As the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) has just said in a sedentary intervention, most people outside the House regard income tax as only part of the picture. They often speak in terms of stoppages. When we consider matters in that light, we must also include the 9 per cent. employee national insurance contribution, which merely compounds the problem to which I am drawing attention. The smoothing of the gradient should be a priority for income tax reform, if not in this Finance Bill then certainly in the new Parliament.

Once the Finance Bill becomes an Act, we shall have an income tax structure which is badly out of kilter with built-in disincentive effects at the point of entry and at the higher rates. Taxpayers will be faced with the two cliffs and a number of higher rates which are still too high. I want a structure to replace the present structure in which we move to a tax gradient, for example, with a starting rate of income tax of 20 per cent. moving up perhaps in five or six equal stages to a top rate of 45 per cent. and linked perhaps to judicious reform of some tax allowances.

When considering income tax we need to consider both sides of the matter—the rates of tax and the coverage of tax which involves tax allowances. The entry point of tax—in addition to my comments about rates—should be at a relatively higher level of income and the various bands should be smoothed as much as possible so that at the end of the exercise the state becomes not the senior partner, but a junior partner in sharing the benefits of a person's earnings. In that context, it is important that the absolutely top rate of tax should be less than 50 per cent.

I have made some calculations as to what an income tax gradient of the kind that I have described might cost in terms of revenue forgone. In the tax year 1986-87, my best estimate is that it might have a full-year cost of £11,000 million. However, in any tax reform proposal of this kind, it would obviously be sensible and indeed inevitable that any Government should phase such a change over two or three years. If we consider the matter in that context, my proposal would mean an annual cost of about £3·7 billion each year over three years. In the context of some of the other tax changes that we have made recently, that would not be out of court. Those figures of cost would take no account of the dynamic boost to the revenue that would almost certainly flow from the lower rates of income tax on the evidence of this country with its higher rate reductions and from other countries. If we consider this matter overall, a tax reform package, even if confined to the realm of income tax along the lines that I have described, could be beneficial to economic activity and to personal incentives in this country.

In parenthesis, I want to state that the cause of such radical tax reform — to which I have long been committed—has not been assisted over the years in the United Kingdom by the administrative and institutional arrangements for advising upon and implementing tax policy. That is not an original point. It was well made recently by John Kay in his valedictory lecture to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. As Mr. Kay can explain this matter so much more expertly than I, the House might be interested to hear a brief quotation from that lecture in which Mr. Kay sets out the way in which the total involvement of the Inland Revenue at the expense of the Treasury is not necessarily in the national interest. Mr. Kay put it like this:

> "Revenue policy ideas have been based on narrowly conceived administrative criteria, which have not been sensitive either to the broader economic, social or political context within which policy operates, or to the realities of the business and commercial environment. Nor could one have expected anything else. The Inland Revenue is not an economic department—it employs, as a matter of fact, four economists. It undertakes little research or analysis, and commissions none, although there is a very substantial statistics collection activity. It does not engage in strategic planning. And the experience that officials bring to bear on the issues before them is, almost exclusively, experience of tax administration."

Whatever attributes the Inland Revenue may have, working out complicated long-term tax policy is not necessarily one of them.

As Ministers have to rely heavily on advice from civil servants on these complicated matters, I believe that the answer to this institutional problem is significantly to expand the tax policy division of the Treasury on the model of the United States Treasury's Office of Tax Analysis and to encourage such a body to involve itself in timely and open publication of well-constructed tax reform proposals which could then be widely discussed and perhaps improved before the Chancellor of the day decided what shape of tax reform he wished to introduce in a subsequent reforming Budget. If we approach tax reform on that basis rather than on the traditional rabbit-out-of-hat basis that we have come to associate with Chancellors of all parties, I believe that there will be a much better chance of building the kind of informed public support that is needed for such a package to be carried through.

Secondly, I warmly welcome the range of measures designed further to assist small businesses. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has already referred to some of them. I especially welcome the proposed reduction to 27 per cent. in the rate of corporation tax for small companies compared with the 42 per cent. which prevailed in 1979. The introduction of optional cash accounting for VAT for businesses with a turnover of up to £250,000 is also a good idea as it means effectively that they will not have to account for VAT until their bills have been paid. I also welcome the introduction of optional accounting for VAT for businesses in that category as it means that they will have to complete only one VAT return per year with nine advance payments on account. All those measures are most welcome because of the need for dynamism and a vibrant small business sector. Moreover, they are merely the latest instalment in a range of measures introduced by

[Mr. Forman]

the Government over the years to assist small businesses. I remind the House of the measures benefiting unincorporated businesses, the abolition of the national insurance surcharge and the introduction of the business enterprise scheme.

Thirdly, I warmly welcome the proposals in clauses 107 to 122 designed to encourage profit-related pay. I was encouraged to learn earlier today that more than 3,200 firms have already registered an interest in setting up such schemes in favour of their employees and I am sure that many more will follow in response to the generous tax relief provided in the Bill. The relief is generous because it offers the opportunity for up to half of any profit-related pay up to an annual limit of £3,000 per employee to be exempt from income tax. Not enough people outside are aware of the dramatic figures already given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary when he said that such relief could be equivalent to a further 4p reduction in the basic rate of income tax for employees of firms which take full advantage of the scheme. It is an excellent way of helping British firms to overcome two persistent problems which have bedevilled us for far too long. First, it will help to overcome the all too familiar "them and us" syndrome because it will give workers an extra cash stake in the firms for which they work. Secondly, it will help to break down the rigidities which, unhappily, still exist in the labour market by encouraging greater pay flexibility. I hope that the take-up of the schemes will expand further over the years and thus help to extend employee involvement and improve corporate performance. If we can achieve both those things through the mechanism of successive Finance Bills, they will be of great utility to the real economy.

A complementary mechanism for encouraging wider participation by employees in the firms for which they work is the idea of employee share ownership schemes. As an honorary director of Job Ownership Limited, I am strongly committed to this and argued for it in Committee on last year's Finance Bill. I was therefore disappointed that there was no further measure of tax relief for such schemes in this year's Finance Bill, but I live in confident hope that a radical measure along these lines will be included in an early Finance Bill in the new Parliament, whenever that may be. Even at this stage, I strongly commend the idea of time-limited tax relief for employee share ownership schemes, not only for all employee share ownership schemes on the so-called democratic capitalist model which I strongly favour but for those permitting partial equity participation by employees of a qualifying firm. Examples from many quarters such as the National Freight Consortium, the John Lewis Partnership and the Baxi Partnership show that such schemes have been as effective in this country as in the United States by improving corporate performance, spreading share ownership and creating a more constructive and well-informed climate of opinion in which to conduct industrial relations.

We are all grateful that the climate of industrial relations has improved significantly and that the number of problems and stoppages has greatly declined. Nevertheless, any measure which has the effect of further improving industrial relations must be welcomed in its own right. Moreover, such a policy of employee share ownership would be entirely consistent with the Conservative policy of extending privatisation. It would involve more people as shareholders as well as employees. We are all multi-dimensional in that there are many different aspects to our lives. This would have a broadening effect and, I believe, breed a more positive attitude to new, productive investment which is wanted by both sides of the House. It would also facilitate the sale of family businesses to their employees, especially when there are family succession problems. Finally, I believe that it would foster a greater spirit of genuine partnership in British industry and commerce. All in all, I believe that the idea deserves the closest possible attention and I hope that it will benefit from the support of Members in all parts of the House.

This has been a very good Budget, leading to a sensible and welcome Finance Bill containing a number of timely and popular measures. I am confident that it presages further progress in the coming years, presumably in the new Parliament, especially in the areas of fundamental tax reform and the widening of ownership. On that basis, I am happy to give it my full support.

6.9 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Not for the first time I find myself in agreement with much of what the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) has said. His advocacy of tax reform has interested the House on previous occasions. It is a great pity that some of the Labour Members who are barracking at present do not take more interest in radical tax reform than they have shown recently. The hon. Gentleman's commitment to co-ownership and to employee participtiion deserves support from hon. Members of all parties. I am sure that if he tables amendments in Committee along the lines of the schemes that he has proposed, they will receive a wide measure of support across the Committee.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I return to the beginning of the debate and to the optimistic speech of the Chief Secretary in his assessment of the current economic position. That contrasted remarkably with a letter that I received in the last few days from one of his ministerial colleagues in another Department, in which the Minister referred to "these difficult times". There was little in the Chief Secretary's speech that gave the impression that we were facing difficult times. However, that is what a Minister from the Department of Health and Social Security told me.

Why did the Minister point out that we are facing difficult times? I shall tell the House why. I raised with the Minister the problems faced by people who are aged over 80 and who have an age supplement of 25p a week. I suggested that that was a scandal and an insult to those people. When addressing pensioners over 80, the Government find, all of a sudden, that we are facing difficult times. However, when the Chief Secretary comes to the House to talk to those who are receiving 2p off income tax, at a cost of £2·2 billion to the Exchequer, all of a sudden we are facing a rosy climate. There is a remarkable contrast in those Ministers' pronouncements, depending upon the audience that they are facing.

Many of those who will benefit from the 2p cut in income tax would have great sympathy with Mr. George Brand in my constituency who wrote to me about the insulting level of age allowance for those over 80. I wish that Ministers would speak consistently when addressing

the country and not seek to give the impression that everything is milk and honey as the election approaches, when clearly, for such people it is not.

I want to point to the three major defects in the Government's policies at present. First, the demand that the Government have stimulated in the economy is led much too much by consumer expenditure. That is leading to problems with the balance of payments and inflation. Secondly, the Government's policy is defective because unit labour costs in this country are still increasing at a rate which is beyond those faced by the competition from countries overseas. To a considerable extent, that is related to the fact that pay increases are still going ahead, having done so for the past two years, at between 7½ and 8 per cent. Inevitably, that is leading to a loss of competitiveness by comparison with Germany, Japan and other countries.

The third defect in the Government's strategy is the decline, ineffectiveness and lack of support for manufacturing industry, which my hon. Friends and I regard as the core of the economy, upon which the service industries and, at the end of the day, the wealth of the country depend. The Budget does very little—I am not saying that it does nothing — to address the fundamental problems of manufacturing industry.

The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said that we had had such high levels of unemployment in recent times because of the shake-out of jobs that did not exist in industry. I must tell him that he is completely wrong. Some jobs certainly needed to go because firms operated with inefficient and uncompetitive manning levels. However, I remind the right hon. Gentleman that what happened between 1979 and 1982 was nothing to do with a shake-out of over-manning. We lost 20 per cent. of our manufacturing capacity during that time. That meant not just that a few people were shaken out from individual firms, but that whole firms were going bankrupt and closing down. The reason for that was the Government's economic policy. The high exchange rate and the monetarism to which the Government was wedded in the past brought about the collapse of perfectly efficient and successful companies that could not survive against a background of exchange rates and the economic policies that the Government pursued at that time. That is when unemployment shot up to its present level. That did not happen as a result of shake-outs in industries in more recent times which have undoubtedly led to some of the increases in productivity that we now welcome.

However, the damage that was done to our manufacturing base will be with us for many years to come. One of the major defects in the Government's policy is that they do not address themselves and their resources to dealing with the problem. Last year, in his Budget speech, the Chancellor said that as a result of the oil price fall industry had

"an outstanding opportunity both to increase its exports and to reduce import penetration in the home market". — [*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 169.]

Since then, the projection for the balance of payments for 1987 has deteriorated from a surplus of £3 billion to a deficit of about £2·5 billion. The projected manufacturing deficit for 1987 has widened to a horrific £8 billion. That hardly suggests that industry has taken advantage of the decline in oil prices, to which the Chancellor pointed last year.

We need only look around us, in areas such as my own, which has the highest level of unemployment of any county in Great Britain, outside the Western Isles, to see that that deterioration continues. In my constituency during the last few weeks we have seen the final closure of the engineering firm of Head Wrightson, which had a magnificent record, going back over 100 years, of high quality manufacture and constructional engineering work. That firm is being closed down when the orders for new power plants, for which we have been waiting for years under this Administration, are just coming forward. Typical of many such firms in our region, Head Wrightson made first-class, quality products for the nuclear generating industry, heat exchangers and all sorts of plant for the process plant industry. Just as those orders are coming down the track, that firm has finally collapsed. There is no hope of keeping it as a going concern, despite the magnificent efforts that the work force and the management have put in.

It is a tragedy to see yet another—in fact the last firm of any size in the engineering sector in my constituency—being closed down in that way. We have lost one after another during the past seven or eight years. I warn the Government that now that that capacity is going and that machine tools and people are leaving that plant, they will not be available in the future and orders will go overseas. When orders go overseas, we strengthen not only the manufacturing sectors of those overseas countries, but the service sectors because the idea that one can live without the other is clearly poppycock.

The Chancellor needs to remember that we have lost not only a substantial share of our manufacturing sales overseas, but a substantial share of our invisible market overseas. In fact, our share of world trade in invisibles has fallen from 12 per cent. in 1969 to 7·7 per cent. in 1984. Therefore, the idea that invisibles will pull us out of the mire into which we have sunk is poppycock. All the evidence from countries such as Japan and, indeed, the history of the United Kingdom show that a thriving services sector must be based on a thriving manufacturing sector. A country has overseas insurance, banking and shipping industries and all the other service sector industries because it trades successfully. Unless we do so in manufacturing exports, almost 100 per cent. of which are tradeable, we shall never maintain our share of the invisible market. That is absolutely fundamental.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer should still be worried about the trend of unit labour costs. Increased productivity through a continuing shake-out of labour in manufacturing has reduced unit labour costs, but our earnings growth has remained substantially higher than that of our principal competitors. It is 8 per cent. compared with 2·5 per cent. in the United States, 1·8 per cent. in Japan and 3·2 per cent. in West Germany. Our unit labour costs at an annual rate of 3·7 per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1986 remain higher than those in the United States, which are at minus 0·1 per cent., than those in Japan, which are at 2·7 per cent. and than those in West Germany, which are at 1·8 per cent.

The existence of that gap, together with a firming up of sterling, suggests that our competitive position, far from being the industrial miracle trumpeted by Ministers, is still deteriorating. That is demonstrated clearly in the balance of payments forecasts for the forthcoming year and the horrific deficit forecast in manufacturing goods.

That is why we in the alliance have a different set of priorities from those which the Government have encompassed in the Finance Bill and the Budget. Our

[Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth]

Budget priorities are designed to cut unemployment by about 1 million in three years. We believe that that can be achieved without higher inflation and without increasing the overall tax burden, and by taking several measures which are in marked contrast with those taken by the Government.

First, there should be a job guarantee for all those out of work for a year or more through a new building and improvement programme, a crash programme of education and training for skills, recruitment incentives, new jobs in caring in the community and earlier retirement. Secondly, we believe that a cut of 25 per cent. in the tax on jobs in the regions and unemployment black spots through reduced employers' national insurance contributions could make a major contribution in the regions to which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyme (Mr. Sheldon) referred. Thirdly, we believe that there should be a major expansion of capital expenditure on housing and construction.

Mr. Higgins: I have trouble in understanding how early retirement can give a job guarantee.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Early retirement makes employment available for those coming on to the jobs market. If we increase the early retirement scheme which the Government are already running, it will enable more people to leave industry and make way for young people to be recruited. In that way the unemployment register will be reduced.

Mr. Higgins: How can that give a guarantee to people who will be retired earlier?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Many of those in work would be delighted to retire early if they had the incentive to do so. I am sure that that is the case, not only in my constituency, but in many other areas.

Fourthly, we believe that there should be an attack on the poverty which has hit many people during the recession, through increases in the basic pension of £2·30 for single people and £3·65 for married couples, with a further £3·70 and £5·75 for pensioners with no other income. Child benefit should be increased by £1 and a new basic benefit should be introduced for families on low incomes.

That form of increased consumer expenditure has much less import content in it and much more demand on the domestic economy than the expenditure that the Government are stimulating by cutting taxes by 2p.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Will the hon. Gentleman enlarge on what he said about retirement pensions? Is he saying that there should be a two-tier retirement pension and that the second pension should in some way be means-tested and available only to people with no savings?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: We are saying that the pension should be increased for a single person by £2·30 and for a couple by £3·65, and that there should be a supplement for those with no other income of £3·70 for a single person and £5·75 for a married couple. That is consistent with our proposals for integrating the tax and benefit systems and for targeting the money on those who need it most. We would not throw money all over the place like a blunderbuss without targeting it on the hardest hit, as the Labour and Conservative parties wish to do.

We want the Government to apply for full membership of the European monetary system and to join the exchange rate mechanism which would help to maintain the pound's competitiveness and bring interest rates down by 2 per cent. on average.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I must not give way as other hon. Members wish to speak.

We would introduce a tax allowance of up to £500 for people investing in shares to encourage wider share ownership. I shall return to that. The stamp duty on house purchase should be abolished. We must embark on an industrial strategy with incentives to industry to invest in new technologies, education and training to a much greater extent than the Government have been prepared to do if we are to underpin the long-term growth of our manufacturing sector.

The Government have done something of benefit by introducing in clauses 107 to 122 a scheme for profit-related pay. The alliance welcomes the concept of profit-related pay which is based on ideas of profit-sharing and industrial partnership which we have supported for a long time. We accept the basic framework, limiting PRP to the lower 20 per cent. of basic pay or £3,000. That means that only basic pay of up to £15,000—about the level of the employee's national insurance contribution threshold—qualifies for the scheme and is far more equitable than the proposals originally contained in the Green Paper. However, the scheme offers insufficient incentives for both employees and employers to commit a substantial proportion of their pay to the PRP scheme. Therefore, we shall seek to move amendments to scale up the reliefs available for those committing more than 10 per cent. of total pay to a PRP scheme and to offer a payroll incentive to employers to initiate schemes in the form of reduced employers' national insurance contributions. We would also limit the relief to the basic rate.

The effect of that would be to redistribute the incentive to employees much closer to average earnings and to encourage them to commit a higher proportion of their pay to the scheme. Instead of giving a tax break to employees paying tax at higher rates so that those on £40,000 a year paying 60 per cent. tax would receive £900 a year under the present PRP compared with £405 for the basic rate taxpayer, all employees would get up to £805 a year relief. Thus, for employees our changes would mean a tax rate of only 19 per cent. for PRP and for employers it would mean a cut of 2 per cent. in their national insurance contributions for 20 per cent. of the paybill of the employment unit. Clearly, we can pursue this further in Committee.

Those large incentives should be for longer than a year, which is insufficient to test the effectiveness of such schemes. They should be linked to agreements of at least two years' duration which would encourage the development of new forms of pay bargaining. At present the Government appear to assume little or no union and staff participation, no doubt fearing that PRP will be used to open company books. We in the alliance have no such inhibitions in advocating both disclosure of information to members of staff and trade unions and their full

involvement in such schemes. We believe that is an absolutely essential part of the success of such schemes if workers are to be involved in the performance of their firms and in their firms' results.

In introducing the scheme the Government have proposed substantial and deeply damaging changes for existing schemes. I hope that they will look at that again. I am sure that representations have been made already to them about it. Their proposal to make employers and employees pay national insurance on all profit-sharing payments which are made through discretionary trusts will undoubtedly undermine existing schemes, reduce the size of the final profit pool and cut payments to employees.

It is right to tackle the abuse by which, following the abolition of the national insurance contribution ceiling for employers, firms with higher paid employees have been setting up trusts with the sole intention of avoiding national insurance contributions, and one supports the Government in seeking to stop that occurring, but surely there is a better way of closing that loophole than cutting off this concession for bona fide profit-sharing schemes such as those run by the John Lewis Partnership, ICI, Sainsburys, English China Clays and many other companies. I hope that the Government will think again about this and look at the proposals in the light of the comments that such firms have made.

The impact of the Government's proposals will be substantial. A firm such as ICI, as the CBI has pointed out, will lose about £4 to £5 million per annum as a result of this and its employees will lose some £60 to £80 per annum. English China Clays will lose about £500,000 per annum and its employees about £30 to £40 per annum. I hope that the Government will look at that and see whether amendments can be introduced to reduce the impact on existing schemes.

As to wider share ownership, I am very disappointed that the Government have not modified the personal equity plan proposals that they brought forward in the last Finance Bill. We shall seek to introduce a scheme along the lines of the Loi Monory system in France to give tax relief to taxpayers who wish to invest in shares.

I think that the personal equity plan will fizzle away to virtually nothing because at the moment it is only of great benefit to those who are already paying capital gains tax. The benefit to a person who has a small income and the small amount of capital gain from participating in a personal equity plan is almost totally eaten up by the 1·5 per cent. that most companies charge for adminstering the scheme. I hope that the Government will think again about that, and I also hope that they will respond to pressure from Back Benchers such as the right hon. Member for Worthing and introduce wider share ownership proposals than those that they have so far been prepared to contemplate.

I should like to raise one final point that I raised during the course of the Budget debate—the very mean attack on working men's clubs and non-profit making clubs of one sort or another. The Government are increasing the tax on gaming machines by 25 per cent. to give it to people who go to the races by removing the tax on on-course betting. That has been a substantial blow to many clubs in areas such as mine. The clubs are social institutions which have an enormous community involvement and which do a great deal for the children of members and their pensioner members. They include a wide range of different types of institutions, but many of them have been in substantial financial difficulty as a result of the recent recession. When there is 20 per cent. unemployment in an area the clubs are hard hit by the drop in income and many have closed down. This further imposition of tax will inevitably lead to further financial difficulties. I have received representations from the Queen's club, the Acklam Garden City club and various other clubs, and I have also received a petition from my constituents about this. I hope that the Government will think again about such a substantial increase in tax. If it had been an inrease which was in line with inflation over the past year the clubs would not have complained, but to use the revenue from that to abolish tax for on-course betting seems a particularly invidious thing to have done. Why people in clubs should be penalised to benefit those who have the freedom to bet on-course is unclear to me, as I am sure it is to many of the members of the clubs.

The Government's economic strategy for manufacturing industry is misplaced and defective in terms of the character of the demand that they are stimulating in the economy and by not paying sufficient attention to the increases in pay and the deterioration in unit labour costs. The long-term interests of industry and the economy are being eaten away by the short-term interests of the Government, who are putting all their attention behind a pre-election Budget boost. That is of no benefit to the long-term interests of industry. It is of no interest to those who have been hardest hit by the recession in recent years, and the Government will pay the price when the general election eventually comes.

6.35 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): In the Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer achieved the virtuous treble of being able to provide for higher spending in key areas, while at the same time achieving a substantial reduction in Government borrowing and further cuts in taxation.

The key to those achievements lies in the substantial and sustained growth of the economy, which is the expected outcome of the consistent and prudent financial and economic policy that the Government have pursued since they were elected in 1979.

The buoyancy of tax revenues is clear evidence of the improved profitability of businesses. One has only to look at corporation tax, which has yielded £1·8 billion more than the original forecast for last year.

I have no doubt that the substantial structural reforms of corporation tax which were contained in the 1984 Finance Act have made a major contribution to the transformation of the business environment. Those reforms removed the tax shelters of stock relief and 100 per cent. capital allowances; stock relief became largely redundant with the defeat of inflation. Those tax shelters of stock relief and capital allowances of 100 per cent. tended to induce businesses to make non-commercial decisions, so that if towards the end of a financial year a company had been so imprudent in the management of its affairs to envisage a corporation tax liability at the end of it, it would simply be advised to buy more stock or buy a few more machines to wipe out that liability. Those tax shelters were removed, and in so doing the Chancellor was able to reduce corporation tax in progressive stages from the 52 per cent. rate which we inherited to the 35 per cent.

[Mr. John Watts]

rate that we enjoy today. For small companies the reduction has been from 42 per cent. to 27 per cent., as proposed in the Finance Bill.

Another effect of this structural change was that much brainpower in companies was switched from concentrating on how to minimise tax bills to how better to manage the company profitably. That has benefited the whole economy. Companies have seen their profits rise dramatically as more attention has been paid to managing the business and to commercial considerations. At the same time, corporation tax revenue has grown substantially under the stimulus of lower rates of taxation.

It is quite clear that lower taxation provides a strong stimulus to economic activity. Sadly, that lesson is lost on the Opposition parties. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) remains extremely coy about his party's proposals on taxation. However, today some of his hon. Friends have let the cat out of the bag. We have seen the Labour party's secret agenda for taxation reform.

In the Treasury Select Committee, the hon. Members for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) produced as an amendment an alternative budget strategy, proposing that the burden of taxation on business should be increased to raise an extra £5 billion. This would be in addition to the £5 billion that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) would wish to raise from the 1 per cent. levy on the turnover of businesses. The alternative agenda would require putting corporation tax back to a rate of 52 per cent., but not just for mainstream corporation tax — advanced corporation tax would also be charged at 52 per cent.

I would be interested to see, when the Bill reaches Committee, whether that proposal is put forward as an amendment by the Labour party Front Bench spokesmen, or whether they would seek to disown it.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Watts: I will give way to the hon. Lady on the condition that on this occasion she answers my challenge and that which I made in the previous debate, on the public expenditure White Paper, when I asked her to go through the £34 billion list of Labour party spending plans and tell me and the House which are now being disowned by the Labour party. If she will disown the proposal of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby and the £34 billion, I am happy to give way to her.

Dr. McDonald: It would have been far better if the hon. Gentleman had given way to begin with. I rose simply to put the hon. Gentleman out of his misery by saying that there will be no Opposition Front Bench amendments along the lines that he is suggesting. My two hon. Friends exercised their right, as any Back Bench Member of a Select Committee may, to put forward their own ideas. As regards the £34 billion, I am not proposing to waste the time of the House in discussing the Chief Secretary's fantasy. We hear far too much about it as it is, and I do not intend to prolong the House's long-suffering patience in listening to what the Chief Secretary and his minions have to say about his fantasy.

Mr. Watts: I am grateful for that clarification. The £34 billion in the proposals from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will remain the Labour party's hidden agenda, to be revealed and acknowledged as a legitimate child of the Labour party only if it should, by some mischance, win a general election.

The proposition that business rather than people should be taxed has some superficial attractions until one remembers that individuals depend on those businesses for their employment. They have created the 1 million extra jobs since 1983, and will create the 2 million further jobs that we need to bring unemployment down to the 1 million level, which in the current economy would probably represent full employment.

The assaults on the profits of private companies are also an attack on working people who save through life assurance, pensions or unit trusts, or direct equity investment to provide more financial security in their retirement. Such attacks on the profits of business are also an attack on millions of pensioners whose current standards of living depend on the profitability of the business in which their savings are invested, whether directly or indirectly, through financial institutions.

Under this nightmare hidden agenda, which was revealed today, pensioners and their pension schemes are to suffer a double blow because not only are the profits of business to be taxed at a horrendous rate, but the taxation benefits enjoyed by pension funds are also to be withdrawn, except from those who have fully invested in index-linked gilt-edged securities. Perhaps that would be one way to force an unwilling financial sector to lend money to a spendthrift Labour Government. No doubt pension funds would need to seek some index-linked investment if the implementation of a £34 billion spending spree by a Labour Government were to lead to a resurgence of hyper-inflation.

Home owners also do not escape from these nightmare proposals. Pension funds and relief on mortgage interest are described as

"very largely a means of tax avoidance".

That may be the view in Grimsby, but it is certainly not the view of first-time buyers in my constituency who have to obtain mortgages substantially higher than the £30,000 limit on mortgage tax relief, but then my constituents live in the real world, which is clearly alien territory to the Labour party.

My constituents will not be tempted to vote Labour by the proposals to phase out mortgage interest relief, but thankfully they will be able, by the sensible use of their votes in the forthcoming general election, to ensure that none of these nightmare threats is ever enacted.

Dr. McDonald: What about the Finance Bill?

Mr. Watts: I can hear catcalls from the Opposition Benches. As you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Order Paper specifies that the report of the Select Committee is also part of the business for the debate, and I am dealing with proposals that figure quite large in that report. I am coming to the proposals in the Finance Bill.

I welcome the further reduction in income tax to 27p in the pound, bringing the cut to 6p since the Government first came to office, in addition to the raising of thresholds by one fifth more than inflation. My constituents will be watching carefully to see whether the Labour party, the Liberal party, or the SDP vote against this further reduction in direct taxation. I found it rather odd to listen

to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) alleging that the burden of taxation had increased under this Government when the policy of his party would add still further to that burden.

Small businesses in my constituency are enthusiastic about the proposals on VAT, particularly those on the introduction of cash accounting for companies with turnovers of under £250,000 and the option to account for VAT on an annual basis. These will be welcome improvements in the environment for small businesses. I also welcome the extension to 30 days of the period in which businesses must register for VAT. During the passage of the Finance Act last year in Committee, I drew attention to some of the hardships faced by small businesses through not knowing whether they were just going over the registration limited turnover and the comparatively harsh treatment which they received if they transgressed. This extension will be a welcome improvement for small businesses that have other concerns than keeping an eye on turnover and comparing it with VAT regulations.

Taken together with the reduction to 27 per cent. in small companies' rate of corporation tax and the similar reduction in the standard rate of income tax, which applies to unincorporated small businesses, these measures provide a valuable package of further improvements in the financial environment for the small business sector.

Although of rather less significance than those measures, I also welcome the abolition of on-course betting duty. In Committee last year, in the impeccable company of the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks), I supported an amendment to that effect, although perhaps as a former Patronage Secretary he ought not to have seduced me into voting against my Government on the issue as I did.

I had a particular constituency interest in the abolition of on-course betting duty because of the greyhound racing stadium in Slough. Alas, the relief that this measure brings comes too late to save Slough stadium, which has closed to make way for a Co-op supermarket. I fear that my constituents have got the thin end of the deal. Nonetheless, I am pleased that my right hon. Friend was able to make this small but valuable concession to the racing industry.

I am a glutton for punishment and I have served on every Finance Bill——

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): So are we.

Mr. Watts: I am glad to hear it. I have served on every Finance Bill Committee since I entered the House. I think that I look forward to serving on the Committee again this year, but I was somewhat deterred when I heard the complexity of some of the amendments that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) is intending to put forward.

I am looking forward to discussing this Bill because it is probably the last Finance Bill that we will discuss before the election. The debates that we will have in Committee will provide an opportunity to explore the contrasting philosophies of the parties with regard to taxation and economic affairs. We view taxation as a regrettable necessity—a burden that should be minimised. However, the Labour Party clearly considers the state to have the first call on all income and wealth and that the individual should be grateful if any part of that income should be left in his pocket.

The evidence of recent opinion polls and in particular of the NOP poll in *The London Evening Standard* today suggests that the British people favour the Tory philosophy.

Dr. Godman: May I offer a correction to what the hon. Gentleman has said? When the hon. Gentleman discusses opinion polls he is discussing the English opinion polls. The most recent poll in Scotland put Tory party support at 19 per cent.

Mr. Watts: I said that I was referring particularly to the NOP poll in *The London Evening Standard* today. From that poll I draw the conclusion that the British people favour the Tory philosophy rather than the philosophy of the Labour or Alliance parties.

In the face of that rather depressing news the hon. Member for Dagenham, who, in his other capacity, is the Labour party co-ordinator, put a brave face on things in his opening speech. At least he has the consolation that the NOP poll shows Labour creeping up from third place into second place even though it is 15 points behind the Conservative party.

The hon. Member for Dagenham set himself the impossible task in his speech of creating bad news out of good. No matter how hard he tries no one will believe in the impending economic crisis that the Labour party tries to paint for us on every occasion. That crisis does not exist. Neither will anyone believe his VAT scare when we know that the cost of the Labour party's spending programme would involve a VAT rate approaching 50 per cent. if such a programme were to be funded from VAT. The hon. Member for Dagenham alleges that the Government have been taken in by their own propaganda, but rather it is the Labour party that has been taken in by its propaganda. Certainly, the electorate is not taken in by the Labour party's propaganda.

The hon. Member for Dagenham said that the country is crying out for this, that and the other. I confidently predict that the only crying that we are likely to hear later this year will be the wail of lamentation from defeated Labour candidates up and down the country.

6.53 pm

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts). I am glad that he reminded me of his little transgression from the official party line last year in Committee. Indeed, he was a good deal easier to persuade than some of my colleagues during the time when I had some hand in keeping Labour in office.

When the hon. Member for Slough was speaking I had to look up his age in the book because his remarks were so antediluvian that I almost expected him to be of the generation of young Conservatives who used to banter from the back of political meetings in the early 1950s squeaking out, "Groundnuts." In fact I find that the hon. Gentleman was only a few years old at the time. When the hon. Member for Slough said that the Conservatives wish to pay as little tax as possible, I was reminded of the groundnuts scheme. That scheme was an attempt to solve a worldwide shortage in vegetable oil when the world was in desperate need of that oil.

I have always believed that life is not a race where all the prizes go to the strongest and most powerful, but that those who have advantage and ability have a responsibility to look after those not so fortunate.

[Mr. Michael Cocks]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) is becoming a little bit of a doppelganger in these debates. Last year, when I was making an extensive plea on behalf of the luncheon voucher system, he ripped holes into the fabric of my argument. This year, to my great disappointment and chagrin, he has put forward the idea that the Government did not tamper with the excise duty on tobacco because of some obscure business about the retail prices index and not wanting it to go up.

However, I was firmly under the impression that the Government's mind had been made up by the most convincing and persuasive arguments put forward by my colleagues and me in our deputation to the Chancellor. Certainly that is the impression that I have made every effort to convey to my constituents. I hope that no one here will pursue this most unfortunate line in public presentation.

Although I am a former Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury, it is not common for me to engage in debates on monetary matters. Although, on prima facie evidence, the public may believe that someone who carried that grandiloquent title is well versed in such matters, hon. Members present will know different. All that is required is the most vestigial knowledge of arithmetic. During the time when I held that position, all the necessary arithmetic could be done on two hands; in fact, one hand was frequently enough because the majorities were so thin.

I wish to say a few words about the Finance Bill. First, I hope that the House will accept that any occasional infelicities that I may have in my dealings with Her Majesty's Government's inspectors of taxes are irrelevant to the objectivity of my remarks. I wish to discuss the question of tax reform — a subject that has become much more topical lately. No doubt it will feature in various election manifestos.

In March 1986, the Government produced a Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation. However, that document made little mention of tax administration. The House will be aware that, in July 1980, a committee was set up under Lord Keith on the enforcement powers of revenue departments. That committee reported in March 1983. Part of that committee's report stated:

"At an early stage we formed the view that the mechanisms which the Board of Inland Revenue were striving to operate were in many respects antediluvian and quite unsuited to modern conditions."

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury discussed streamlining. Indeed, chapter 5, clauses 123 to 137 of the Finance Bill are concerned with tax management provisions. The briefing notes issued together with the Budget there referred to the "pay and file system" that will be introduced.

I ask the Government to consider seriously how that squares with two recent articles in *The Times*, on 9 and 10 March, by David Saputed. The subject was the taxation system. They did not receive the attention that articles of that calibre would normally receive because at that time the nation was desperately concerned about and overshadowed by the Zeebrugge ferry disaster and the tragic loss of life. Had that not been foremost in people's thoughts, more notice might have been taken of the articles.

I ask Treasury Ministers to study the articles. The first, on 9 March, is headed, "Taxpayers face unfair fight". It begins by saying that millions of people pay too much tax. It goes on to quote Mr. Brian Prime, chairman of the policy unit of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses. Small businesses have been mentioned several times in the debate. According to Mr. Prime, the tactics used by inspectors to extract money

"would only be judged as extortion"

if used by any other group or company. There is further quotation in the article by Mr. Henry Toch, a City tax consultant and former Inland Revenue inspector, who says:

"Many accountants share my experience of coming across a hard-nosed attitude where inspectors are prepared to use the considerable legal armoury at their disposal to crush the fight out of anybody daring to challenge their judgments."

I do not want to overstate the case, but concern is expressed in not only the first article but the second, which appeared the following day and is headed:

"Weight of law in taxman's favour".

The first paragraph says:

"Taking on the tax inspector can involve time, cash and a lot of courage. Even if the individual wins eventually, the candle may not have been worth the light."

The article goes on to make various points, saying:

"Unlike VAT cases, there are no costs awarded in Inland Revenue cases."

The article says that anybody taking on the Inland Revenue in a dispute is faced with enormous legal back-up on the other side, paid for from public funds, whereas the taxpayer is much more limited in that respect.

The Keith committee concluded:

"What is needed is a proper disputes procedure under which the taxpayer can complain to an independent tribunal when he considers that powers have been misused. Accordingly we consider that this subject is central to the theme of providing the necessary balance between the taxpayer and the Revenue Department."

That balance should be examined.

The problems of small traders need to be considered. If a small trader is investigated by the Inland Revenue, it can be extremely costly for him because he will probably have to pay an accountant to make sure that his affairs are completely sorted out. A great deal of investigation may be needed. It will drag on for months. Even if the trader is found to be innocent, he still has to meet the costs. Over and above financial costs, somebody who is investigated in that manner is subjected to a great deal of personal worry and anxiety. On top of trying to run a small business, that is a heavy burden. That burden should be eased. I hope that the Government will try to do something about that.

There is no parallel provision in the Taxes Management Act 1970 to protect the taxpayer from negligence. The problem is that any error in a tax return, irrespective of how it occurs, constitutes neglect. We shall leave aside the problems of people committing fraud or wilful default. Innocent oversights are classified as neglect. There is no corresponding provision on the part of the Revenue. When there is delay in dealing with papers in the Revenue office, the inspectorate can still profit from the delay in terms of interest and penalties. The unfair balance even extends as far as the interest on unpaid tax.

We should consider seriously what can be done about that problem and whether we should have a tax ombudsman. I know that the Parliamentary Commissioner can already deal with cases of maladministration, but that does not meet the problem. I hope

that the Government will consider that seriously and possibly discuss it further in Committee. I hope that whoever forms the next Government will take it seriously. It will be one way of getting away from the idea that people have when dealing with the Inland Revenue that it is, "Them against us," a gargantuan machine with enormous resources which it is hard for small people to take on and tackle.

But there is one glimmer of hope. In my recent tax return I received a copy of the taxpayer's charter, dated July 1986. It tells me that I have important rights and entitlements as a taxpayer. Help and information is available. The charter states:

"the staff of the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise will at all times carry out their duties courteously, considerately and promptly".

I hope that that betokens a new wind blowing through the Inland Revenue.

I do not know what lies in store in terms of the next Administration, but I hope that we shall have a Labour Government. I have not taken part in the knockabout in the debate, because I am trying to make a serious point. Whoever occupy the Treasury Bench after the general election, I hope that they will take the matter seriously. If they do so, they will relieve hundreds of thousands of people running small businesses of a great deal of worry and many millions of ordinary citizens of the fear of becoming involved in tax disputes. If the slate can be wiped clean and if attention is paid to the administration of tax affairs, we shall achieve the balance, and the country's spirit will be invigorated.

7.7 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): It is a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks), who enjoys great popularity, at least on Conservative Benches. He also has his adherents on Opposition Benches, although I believe that that popularity is not universal. Perhaps that is something to do with the right hon. Gentleman's previous incarnation.

I have a great deal of sympathy with what the right hon. Gentleman said about the problems of the taxpayer fighting the Revenue—not because I have ever had any trouble with the Revenue, but I know what it is like to fight a large organisation effectively with limited amounts of money. The Government should consider the right hon. Gentleman's point seriously. I hope that he will not regard it as too much of an impediment to the achievement of his goals if I add my support to what he said.

In his speech, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary set the scene for the Finance Bill. It is based on secure economic and financial foundations. Compared with a decade ago, things have been transformed. Whereas at that time we were at the bottom of the world growth and productivity league, we are now near the top. Economic growth this year is scheduled to exceed even that in Japan. Inflation is down to the lowest level for 20 years. Exports of manufactured goods, to which the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) devoted considerable attention, were up by 6 per cent. in the final quarter of last year compared with a year earlier. Manufacuring industry's output last year grew rapidly. In tandem with that, we now enjoy rapidly falling unemployment. Unemployment has fallen more rapidly in the last six months than in any similar period since 1973. So the attempts by Opposition Members to paint a picture of crisis will find little support in the country at large.

The speech by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary was, therefore, an inspiration to us all. It contrasted sharply with that of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Whereas my right hon. Friend demonstrated inspiration, the hon. Member for Dagenham showed desperation. That is one up on what we would have had if the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) had opened the debate. In that case, we would have had expectoration and perspiration. At least Conservative Members have something to crow about.

The Opposition are basing their electoral appeal in the coming election on insubstantial economic and financial grounds. They seem to be setting two hares to run in the hope that they will hide from the general public the disaster that their economic policy would entail. First, they argue that my right hon. Friend's Budget this year constitutes in some way a bribe to the electorate. If the Chancellor were seriously interested in bribing the electorate, he would have devoted the whole of his financial leeway—part of which he devoted to reducing the PSBR—to the reduction of taxation. We could have more than met the objective of the Government for the past eight years of reducing the basic rate of income tax to 25p, although I believe that that would not have been a prudent course of action. If my right hon. Friend had done that, Opposition Members could justifiably have attacked the Budget as being explicable in terms of an electoral bribe. In practice, he did not do that; he decided to reduce taxation by only half the amount that he had at his disposal.

The second hare that the Opposition tried to set running was the ridiculous scare about the potential increase in the scope of value added tax after the next election. What they have not yet been able to explain is why they think that we will need the money—because the finances of the Government are in good order. We are not in the business of increasing or extending taxation but of reducing it. There is no reason why we should try to increase the level of VAT or reduce the number of exemptions from it. Indeed, the Government have vigorously opposed the European Commission's attempts to do so in the European Court.

The predictions that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has been making throughout the country in recent weeks are without foundation. He is not the best judge of form in the predictions market. He has become more and more like some sort of inverted Mr. Micawber, always waiting for something to turn down, in order to rescue him from the effects of the Opposition's folly in saddling themselves with the millstone of policies which are far from appealing to the British people.

Dr. Godman: That is a mixture of metaphors.

Mr. Hamilton: If so, it should appeal to the Labour party, whose latest poster campaign has followed me down that road.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not have a good record in these matters. In 1983 he was predicting that, in a year's time, inflation would be in double figures again. In fact, in 1984 inflation was only 5·1 per cent., and it has fallen further since then. At the time of the last Budget the right hon. Gentleman predicted:

[Mr. Hamilton]

"there will be no significant fall in unemployment before the next election or beyond." — *[Official Report,* 19 March 1986; Vol 94, c. 310.]

As I have already said, there have been significant falls in unemployment, and more are to come. As recently as last November the right hon. Gentleman was making further gloomy forecasts about oil that were not subsequently borne out. He wailed:

> "North sea oil is running out, and every time the markets catch a glimpse of what, on present policies, the British economy will be when the oil has gone, they withdraw their confidence from the British economy. That is because the Chancellor has managed to make us peculiarly dependent on the 6 per cent. of gross domestic product that oil provides".—[*Official Report,* 6 November 1986; Vol 103, c.1111.]

In the event, oil prices have plummeted and we have been able to brush that off as being of almost no consequence. We should not have been able to do that without the sound financial and economic base with which the Government have provided the country during the past eight years.

I gather that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is now predicting a Labour victory. As the bookmakers are now quoting odds of 8:1 on for the Conservatives, he is likely to be disappointed in that prediction as well.

One of the reasons why the Opposition are not likely to be successful in the next election—whenever it comes—is their ludicrous spending package. They cannot talk themselves out of that package now and the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) refused to address herself to it when asked to do so by my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts).

Labour Members have saddled themselves with a package of spending that amounts to £34 billion in the course of this Parliament. They have wholly failed to explain the package away because they will not say which parts of it they have jettisoned. That will make the Labour party even less credible in the election than it was in the last. They have said, however, that the income tax cuts in the Finance Bill will be reversed. That, I suppose, is one up on what was said by the hon. Member for Stockton, South, speaking for the alliance. At least we know where the Labour party stands, but it is more difficult with the alliance. If we examine the bare bones of the budget proposals that alliance Members would have executed if they had had their fingers on the levers of power, what we see is merely the Labour party mark II. Whereas the Labour party claims that it would increase spending by £10 billion, the alliance claims that it would increase it by only £4·9 billion. Whereas the Labour party claims that it would increase the borrowing requirement by £6 billion, the alliance says that it would do so by only £2·1 billion. The Labour party claims that it would reduce unemployment by one million in two years; the alliance—more modestly—says that it would reduce it by one million in three years. The Labour party would introduce a statutory minimum wage; the alliance would replace that by some kind of basic benefit. The trend of policy is along the same lines; only the destination is farther off for the Labour party than for the alliance.

Alliance Members have said that they are against the reductions in income tax but, if they were in a position to exercise any influence after the next election, they would not say categorically whether they would restore the reductions that have been made. That is in line with their general policy, which can best be characterised as following the line of the Vicar of Bray. Any hard decisions that have to be taken can be conveniently avoided because they know that they will never have the responsibility of putting them into action. The alliance policy is like one of those films that appear from time to time, in which a golden age reverie is done in soft focus photography with all the hard edges and bright colours removed. The kind of Finance Bill that alliance Members say they would produce does not face up to any of the difficulties that any Government, of whatever persuasion, would have to face. They simply come up with plenty of goodies for which they do not have to pay.

I have examined in some detail the policies that the alliance would implement if it were in government, and which would have to be incorporated in a Finance Bill. I devoted some time to reading the document entitled, "The Time has Come", which was co-authored by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). On the front of the document there is a rather charming photograph of the two right hon. Gentlemen trying to look friendly towards each other. The smile of the right hon. Member for Devonport looks rather like the one that one would expect to see on a piranha fish eyeing a minnow.

Many things are stated in the document which deserve wider currency. The title will be familiar to hon. Members of a literary bent. "The Time Has Come" will be recognised immediately as coming from the Walrus and the Carpenter in "Alice in Wonderland". The passage reads:

> "'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
> 'To talk of many things:
> Of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—
> Of cabbages—and kings—
> And why the sea is boiling hot—
> And whether pigs have wings.'"

Pigs will be flying before alliance representatives are in a position to implement the policies that are adumbrated in "The Time has Come".

The one characteristic that the document has above all others is a sort of studied vagueness. At page 41 there is a reference to spending on infrastructure. The passage reads:

> "How much more we can afford will depend on the economic circumstances at the time."

At page 40 it is said that more borrowing would be desirable

> "provided the deficit is kept within prudent limits . . . and is reduced at times of high growth and falling unemployment."

We are experiencing high growth and falling unemployment; is the alliance saying, therefore, that borrowing is undesirable? There seems to be a contradiction.

At page 41 we are told that the alliance would seek to spend more than the Government's forecast spending, but again it does not say how much it would spend. I am sorry to make such a terrible pun, especially in the absence of the hon. Member for Stockton, South, but there seems to be more wriggle than worth.

If we compare the policy of the Labour party with that of the alliance, it is a pale pink rose, if I might use another metaphor, rather than the full blood-red claret of the Labour party.

Talking of claret brings me to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who, alas, is not with

us this evening. On 18 March, the right hon. Gentleman said that income tax cuts would not be the alliance's priority this year. He added:

"There is no question but that the impact upon unemployment of income tax cuts is very weak per million pounds spent, or whatever unit of management is chosen." —[*Official Report*, 18 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 965.]

In the light of that statement I stand aghast at the moderation of alliance Members in proposing such modest proposals to reduce unemployment. If the answer to unemployment is simply greater spending that can be financed by greater taxation, why do they not propose it?

Every year the alliance comes forward with a new set of figures, but it never explains how they have come about. This year it says that it wants to spend another £4·9 billion to reduce unemployment by 1 million in three years, but in previous years it has proposed different policies. Last year, for example, it was proposing to spend £3·5 billion to reduce unemployment by 750,000 over three years. Before that it was £5 billion to reduce unemployment by 1·5 million over four years. Why do we get these different figures every year? If £5 billion will cut unemployment by 1 million in three years, why not spend £10 billion to cut unemployment by 2 million in three years or £15 billion to reduce it to zero over the same period, or whatever combination of figures one likes to take?

The alliance is plucking figures out of the air for its own convenience to give spurious credibility to its policies. It admits that its policies will not work unless it can prevent a seepage from increased output into increased inflation, which has been the experience of all those who have assumed high spending policies in the past. Its bulwark is an incomes policy.

The right hon. Member for Hillhead, who claims to have some knowledge of classics and certainly some knowledge of history, will be able to appreciate that incomes policies have never succeeded. Even the Emperor Diocletian had an incomes policy in the days of the Roman Empire. In those days the penalty for breaking the policy was capital punishment, but we know that the right hon. Gentleman would not be in favour of that. Not one alliance Member voted in favour of capital punishment when there was the opportunity to do so. However, even without such a draconian punishment available, it should be apparent that an incomes policy would not work.

When I listened to the right hon. Member for Hillhead when he spoke in the Budget debate, I had more of a sense of déjà vu than a sense of history. He was proposing exactly that which was proposed in the 1960s and 1970s when he was a Cabinet Minister in Labour Governments, and the ultimate effect of their spendthrift policies was to lay the basis for the inflation that so enfeebled Britain when it had to cope with the world depression in 1980 and 1981.

Those who do not learn from the mistakes that have been made in history are condemned to repeat them and that is the position in which the alliance is placing itself. I am amazed that it has forgotten the winter of discontent in 1979, which was a direct consequence of political interference in economic decision-taking and the concomitant of an incomes policy. When industrial muscle has a political effect that can influence the amount of money that goes into an individual's pocket, it is inevitable that the worst industrial practices will be encouraged. The industrial relations record which we left behind us, happily, with the election of a Conservative Government would return to plague us once again if the alliance's policies were implemented.

If that were to happen, we would be back to the days of norms and guidelines. Perhaps the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) will dilate upon the counter-inflation tax that constitutes the alliance's incomes policy proposal. To begin with, I should like to know how the norm that everyone will be obliged to follow will be calculated. As national income is an abstraction that is derived from hundreds of thousands of individual and specific income figures and constitutes, therefore, the totality of individual incomes, the norm in the real world is the exception rather than the rule. If the norm is set too high, it will be effective for the purpose that the alliance claims to be advancing, which is the control of inflation. If it is set too low, the effect, on its own reasoning, would be deflationary, which would be in conflict with one of its major policy objectives, which is to reduce unemployment.

Does the alliance deny that different incomes ought to behave in different ways and that in some years profits should increase generally and that in others they should decrease? Within the general totals new relativities would constantly be formed, and what goes for the nation as a whole goes even more for individual groups within the totality. As new relativities are formed as a result of changed preferences and changed conditions in the real world, it is obvious that prices and wages should move, sometimes in different directions, and that the norm is something that can never be known in advance. A norm can be revealed only in retrospect. Wages in particular will alter at different times, in different places and in different sorts of employment, and an attempt to impose a straitjacket on the economic system would be to seek to achieve the reverse of that which the alliance desires and which we all desire, which is greater economic growth, greater prosperity, higher employment and lower unemployment.

We are faced with a practical difficulty in the implementation of the alliance's counter-inflation tax. The alliance claims that there would be some flexibility to allow greater productivity, but those who receive higher wage increases because of higher productivity will force those whose productivity cannot be increased or has not been increased to have wage increases that are below the norm, if they have wage increases at all. It may be necessary to have wage reductions to preserve the norm figure that is adopted. I cannot see that such a policy is remotely possible of achievement.

What about catching-up exercises that are so much part of public sector pay? The present dispute in the schools is partly a reflection of the difficulty. This year we have offered the teachers a pay increase of 16·7 per cent. and an increase of 25 per cent. over two years. If the hon. Member for Gordon were to take 5·3 per cent. or 4 per cent. as his norm this year, to correspond with the inflation figure, I do not think that he would receive a great deal of support from the teachers, who are claiming an increase many times that sort of figure. A problem will always be found among some group within the population.

They will be catching up, in relative terms, with other groups who have received their increases on previous occasions. What of those whose incomes are not determined collectively? They now constitute the majority of the working population. How will they be covered by the counter-inflation tax? How will fringe benefits be

[Mr. Hamilton]

brought into the equation? I know that we have reduced the importance of fringe benefits—rightly, in my view—over the past eight years. We have tried to concentrate on reducing tax rates, and thus removing some of the privileges that have arisen ad hoc over the years. But how would the hon. Gentleman ensure that those productivity gains, feeding through into non-pecuniary remuneration, were brought into the counter-inflation tax?

The hon. Gentleman must answer those questions. If his incomes policy is only partial, it will be swiftly rejected as unjust by those who must pay the price to give others increases above the norm. Indeed, judging by the limited explanation of the incomes policy in "The Time Has Come", it seems that the exception is the norm. Those excluded from the counter-inflation tax are firms with fewer than 100 employees—that is, 49 per cent. of the population; those taking part in profit-sharing schemes —5 per cent. of the population; the self-employed—10 per cent. of the population; new firms; those who have changed their jobs or their job descriptions; and those in the public sector — another 25 per cent. of the population. I know that those figures involve a certain amount of double counting, but on any reckoning a substantial proportion of the total working population would not be covered by the counter-inflation tax—the central necessity of alliance economic policy, without which the rest of its policy cannot work.

The alliance describes past incomes policies as unfair, bureaucratic, inflexible, over-centralised and denying participation. Yet exactly the same series of characteristics can be applied to its own incomes policy. The minority covered by the tax would have to suffer reductions to stay within the national norm, and that is bound to be regarded as unfair.

What about jobs in which productivity cannot be measured — for example, the job of a Member of Parliament? How do they fit into the system? If the people doing such jobs, cannot ever hope to receive pay increases above the pre-ordained norm, they also are bound to reject that as unjust and unfair. It is bound to be bureaucratic and, if not inflexible, ineffective, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) pointed out on 24 March, as reported in column 245 of the *Official Report*.

The alliance says that there will be comparability exercises—Clegg commissions all round—in the public sector. What a disaster it was for us when we accepted the commission's recommendations in 1979, which torpedoed the previous Labour Government as well. Comparability exercises will produce exactly the same problems that we face now in the public sector, although for different reasons. The relativities of wages to each other are always being moved, and the Government must then decide what they will accept.

Although the alliance claims to support the teachers against the so-called imposed contract of employment recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, it would be obliged to go down that road for every group in the public sector. It would be obliged to impose a settlement that fitted in with its own Government policy, or else risk the collapse of its counter-inflation policy, and hence of economic policy as a whole. We should find that the market economy—which the right hon. Member for Devonport seems to have discovered since he left the Labour party, but which does not seem to appeal so much to the leader of the Liberal party—would be weakened and put into a straitjacket, with results that would be fatal to economic growth and prosperity.

The alliance seems to recognise that. The pay review boards referred to in "The Time Has Come" will apparently take into account public and private sector comparisons, market factors and conditions in local labour markets. If conditions in local labour markets are taken into account, that will have no connection with productivity; it strikes at the very heart of the concept. If that is to apply in the public sector, why should it not also apply in the private sector, which constitutes a much greater proportion of the total working population?

I am afraid that I shall disappoint the hon. Member for Gordon in saying that I believe that alliance economic policy is fundamentally misconceived. Although the alliance does not make as many crass errors as the Labour party, that does not excuse it from the responsibility of proposing policies which are not designed merely for its own electoral advancement and temporary advantage, but which are based on the realism that we as a Government have had to secure and recognise during the past eight years, and which is now achieving very considerable results.

We are the only major party that believes in reducing taxes. I hope that we shall not stop at the aim of reducing the basic rate of income tax to 25p in the pound. I believe that in the course of the next Parliament it will be possible to secure a maximum basic rate of 20p. That road has been followed by many of our great industrial competitors: the maximum rate in the United States is now 28 per cent. That is the way to future prosperity. I refer, of course, to federal income tax; state taxes are in addition.

Our party, as a potential party of Government, is the only one that shows any understanding of the realities of economic policy. We shall continue down that path not only until the next election—which may not be long delayed—but throughout the next Parliament. We shall continue to achieve the results that are already becoming apparent, and make the irreversible shift in economic policy that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is always on about—but in a different direction.

7.36 pm

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): I shall not follow the line of the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). I should like to deal largely with the position in my constituency. Judging by the contributions of Conservative Members, my constituency seems to differ considerably from theirs.

What we needed was a Finance Bill for jobs. What we have is one that does nothing for the real economy. The Chancellor had the chance to use the money available to him to invest in our economic future. An economy that is heading for a deep crisis needs investment in manufacturing industry, in houses and schools and in research and development. Anyone who makes such a statement is usually condemned—for instance, by the Chief Secretary in his initial speech—as a prophet of doom and gloom. However, I am not making prophecies. I want to deal with the position as it is.

The Chief Secretary laid great stress on the strength of the economy, but since 1979 the west midlands have lost some 283,000 manufacturing jobs. In Coventry alone, we

have lost 32,000 jobs in that time. At the end of last month, the official unemployment figure for Coventry, North-East was 18·6 per cent. But before the various adjustments in calculation, that figure would have been over 21 per cent., and in parts of my constituency the figures are double that. This month, a thousand employees have been made redundant at Massey-Ferguson, and some 200 have been made redundant at Rolls-Royce. Both companies draw some of their employees from my constituency. A further 200 white-collar jobs have been lost at Austin Rover at Canley, supposedly to reduce costs. That nullifies the 300 extra jobs—for which we are grateful—at the Jaguar plant, and any gains made in small companies in the same area.

The Minister of State knows, because I have been to see him about this, that, but for Treasury policy, one additional customs officer at Coventry airport would result in the creation of a further 300 jobs. I wonder why that has not happened before now.

There has certainly been a fall in Coventry's official unemployment figures. In the last quarter, there was a fall of 370, but that is largely accounted for by the 5,300 people on Government schemes, of whom some 4,000 would be counted as unemployed but for the temporary schemes which, according to the employers in the area, do not solve the skill shortages.

Only 14 per cent. of school leavers go directly into work, and of this tiny percentage white school leavers are three times more likely than those from the black communities to go directly into work. In January, over half the jobless in Coventry had been out of work for over a year, and a quarter had been out of work for more than three years. Before the redundancies to which I have just referred, 29 people were chasing each job vacancy at the Coventry jobcentre. I do not know what the figure is now.

What kind of incentives does the Budget provide for these people, when manufacturing output is still 6 per cent. lower than it was in 1979 and when manufacturing investment is 24 per cent. lower, while the cost of unemployment in my constituency alone amounts to £55 million a year? Would it not be better to pay these people to work, to earn wages and to pay taxes rather than to pay them benefit for doing nothing? The idea now is that if people do not take part in the job training scheme they will not be entitled to benefit. We see here the influence of workfare, the American idea, which is utterly contrary to most of our ideas.

Together with a job, decent accommodation is a basic necessity for most people, but we find that of the 2,500 pre-war council dwellings in Coventry that urgently need modernisation, only 240 a year will be completed at the present rate of spend, determined by Government, so those at the end of the queue will have to wait a decade before their houses are brought up to date.

The House will know that following the bombing of Coventry, our pressing need was to get a roof over people's heads, but the passage of time has shown that these dwellings are subject to damp and cold and that the only feasible way of countering that problem is to install central heating. However, the present programme will take a minimum of six or seven years to complete. That is a long time to be cold. Why does the Treasury not allow councils to use the money available to make quicker inroads into this problem and to replace lifts in tower blocks that are over 30 years old?

Coventry is involving the private sector in its efforts to provide decent homes, but that does not go to the heart of the problem for too many of its citizens. Massive investment is needed in carefully costed schemes, using materials that are readily available in the United Kingdom, thus providing jobs for unemployed building workers and proper homes for people. Tax cuts, which go largely to those who are least in need, have little impact on those about whom I have been speaking, since the poorest taxpayers will still be paying more income tax than they did under Labour.

On a wage of £115 a week, single people will be paying £1·84 more each week in income tax and national insurance contributions than they did in 1978-79, and a married couple with two children, on a similar wage, will be paying £4·37 a week more. Even single pensioners will be paying £1·25 a week more in tax than they did under Labour, and married couples will be paying £2·34 a week more. That even applies, in some measure, to the over-80s. However, those enjoying five times the average wage will be paying, as single taxpayers, £72·45 less a week and a married couple will be paying £63·25 less a week.

In Coventry, we have some of the longest hospital waiting lists in the country, but consideration is being given to the closure of a hospital to meet the harsh budgets that have been set by the Government, with all the implications for prospective patients and job losses. That is the real world for too many of my constituents, and it has not been addressed by the Budget.

Of course, what the Chancellor has done is to play a cynical numbers game: the majority are in work; the majority are in decent homes; the majority are not waiting to go into hospital; the majority are not likely to be too concerned over even a sizeable minority who need work, a decent home, or treatment in hospital. That is the Chancellor's and the Government's arrogant assumption in the run-up to the election. I believe that the majority will prove him wrong. He, too, will then be out of a job and a home, but I trust that he will not need hospital treatment.

7.47 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): In the course of the debate on this year's Budget we have heard a number of virulent attacks on my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's policy by the Opposition parties. It cannot be stressed often enough that the best guarantee of continued employment and the best hope of new opportunities to work and to create wealth is to belong to a healthy economy. Opposition Members who recommend policies that would weaken the economy or that would add to the complexity of the tax structure or to the obscurity of the business outlook are doing no service to the unemployed, and they are probably doing no real service to their own parties, either.

I think that this Budget is very widely appreciated and that it has been welcomed by the public. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on it.

The Budget strategy is quite clear and highly commendable: it is to work towards a further decline in interest rates and a stable rate of exchange rather than towards an early boost to spending on current account which, if anything, is at present on the high side.

As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury pointed out, a central proposal of the Budget is that income tax should be cut by 2p in the pound. In view of the predictions that there would be a much larger cut

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

and the evidence that there could have been a much larger tax cut than 2p in the pound, it should be emphasised that the Chancellor chose to make a reduction of only 2p in the pound. The electorate now has a choice: either that this tax cut should remain or that it should be removed by a Labour Government. That matter will obviously be an election issue.

Although the rate of tax is important, the House ought to be considering the impact of our particular tax structure on the workings of the economy as a whole. The tax structure should assist the most efficient working of free enterprise. The House ought therefore to consider this year's Finance Bill as one of a continuing series by which we are adapting the British economy to the realities of post-Socialist Europe.

Let us first consider the balance of overall public sector and private sector spending, on capital account and on current account. First, on capital account, is borrowing taking too much? Are the Government being greedy on capital account? The obvious answer is no, they are not. There has been a very substantial reduction in the Government's borrowing requirement. Indeed, I think that we should welcome the prudent measures of expansion in Government capital spending which have been announced in recent months.

But as far as the Government's requirement from the economy on current account is concerned, I consider that taxation is still taking too much out of the economy, not just in the way local government—in very many cases—is squandering ratepayers' money and, to some extent, central taxpayers' money, too. There is substantial room for savings in central Government as well. I do not have confidence that the British Civil Service is spending our money efficiently.

I would like to point in particular to defence procurement. I am sure that if we organised our defence procurement policies with the rest of the European allies in particular, we would be able to get much better value for money. I do not think that the Finance Bill is the time to dilate further on that, but I have a feeling that a great deal of taxpayers' money is producing inadequate results where defence procurement is concerned.

There is something nearer home for the Treasury that I would also like to stress. I believe that public administration in the redistribution of income is crassly inefficient and wasteful and I think that the movement towards the introduction of computers is altogether misconceived. I shall come back to the redistribution of income shortly. I recognise that there are tens and tens of thousands of people in the Inland Revenue who are doing a dedicated and difficult job. I do not criticise them for trying to do the best that they can with an obsolete system of taxation. I know, too, that there are tens and tens of thousands of people in the Department of Health and Social Security and in other parts of the public sector dealing with the redistribution of income and I do not blame them for finding their work extremely difficult. I think that the House must blame itself, because we do not force those Departments to do more in the way of innovation and fresh thinking on the redistribution of income, which costs us so much in itself.

What, then, should the objectives be for the series of Government Budgets that I would like to see? We should encourage the accumulation of assets in personal ownership to the absolute maximum, to enable not just the tens of thousands of people as in the past, but millions of people in the future, to make their own choices. The ownership of one's own personal assets is a tremendous liberator, enabling people to make their own choices in so many fields; it enables them to be free British citizens. I would like to see the millions owning their own houses and their own shares, having their own pensions and insurance arrangements, and even owning their own businesses—if they choose to do so—or planning their own careers in their own best interests. Without personal financial resources, those things are really not possible.

We should work to enlarge the area of business activity because it is no longer good enough to think in terms of the British economy alone. I welcome the Government's support for the Commission's campaign for the completion of the internal market by 1992. This is a matter of enormous importance for British business, and we should not only hasten to implement the recommendations coming from Lord Cockfield where the British economy is concerned but we should be bringing all the pressure and influence we can to bear on our continental partners as well.

I would like to see the tax approximation with the Common Market countries proceeding apace. I do not think that there is very much evidence at the moment that the Treasury is taking this seriously just now. I am not just speaking of VAT, but also of corporation tax and all the other tax considerations affecting investment decisions. If we do not make a success of our membership of the Common Market, we shall not make a success of anything else.

I think that we should also seek to lengthen the timespan of discretion for business as far as we can. We have heard a lot about short-termism in recent months: it is a particular disease afflicting the British economy. I would like to see transparency in Government strategy and in the workings of the public sector over a long span of time, so that business people can make predictions which are likely to prove right in the light of their calculations as to how Government policy is going to affect them. We need predictability of tax policy over long periods of time — not just months, but years. That is not really compatible with a conception of an annual Budget handled as we do it, without long-term considerations being constantly under discussion.

I would like the Government to break up the presentation of the Budget into the capital account, the current account and the redistribution of income. It cannot be stressed often enough that the redistribution of income is not an aspect of Government spending. The money that goes to the pensioners is spent by the pensioners. The money that goes to the unemployed or to mothers is spent by the unemployed and the mothers. It is not Government spending. The Government act as the agent for the redistribution of income; but the whole aspect of redistribution should be taken out of the Budget and looked at as another function of Government.

We should study ways of reducing, or even eliminating, the brakes, which are all too serious at the present time, on saving and the incentives to work, and remove the particular burdens or prohibitions that retard the economy—which may produce revenue, but which also produce undesirable effects.

These are all objectives which can be made more easily attainable by prudent tax policy over a series of Budgets.

I would have liked a start to be made in the present Bill. Perhaps, if the election does not intervene, we may have an opportunity of going into some of my recommendations in Committee, but let me outline them quickly now.

I would like to see, as a settled policy of Government, the extreme simplification of taxation for its own sake. I think that the complexity of taxation not only adds to the cost of administration but it makes people timid about their investment decisions and personal plans.

On capital account, I think that it is a pity that in this Budget we have not taken the opportunity to end stamp duty on financial transactions. That would have been the end of another tax which the Chancellor might have brought about this year. It cannot be stressed sufficiently —I speak as the Member for a constituency in which many people earn their livings in the City—that we are in competition with the Pacific and with the dollar area. London should be given the advantages which will enable it to take a pre-eminent place in our own time zone. Stamp duty on financial transactions is an unnecessary burden which we are putting in our own way if we wish the City to make a triumphant success.

I would like also to end capital gains tax on the inflationary element in the gain. That has been stressed before, and I was disappointed that the Chancellor did not take the opportunity, when he was not so short of funds this year, of ending the taxation on the inflationary element which is undoubtedly still there. Better still, we should end capital gains tax altogether except for ultra-short-term gains which are really a form of income.

We should take the unpredictable element out of inheritance tax which, I regret, was reintroduced last year. The best way, in my opinion, is to tax the recipient rather than the originator of the gift. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will reconsider their policy in respect of that alternative approach, possibly this year or in a later Budget, because I believe that the relief of taxation on private capital is likely to be more fruitful in encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit in Britain than a reduction in the basic rate of tax. I am not trying to say that I do not welcome the reduction in the basic rate of tax — of course, every sensible person must do so—but there are taxes on the capital account which need even more urgent consideration.

The tax treatment of income still needs major reforms and there are simplifications on current account which I would also welcome. We should put all personal tax on a single unisex basis. In a Green Paper, which did not receive a very warm welcome, the Government floated the idea of making it possible for husbands and wives to transfer their allowances. That was too complex. It would be better to have a single unisex tax, so that it would not be necessary for a woman to declare whether she was widowed or cohabiting, or her personal circumstances at all. Indeed, it should not be necessary to state one's sex on a tax return at all.

Another change could have been made this year. I understand from a parliamentary answer that it would have cost only about £500 million, which is a small sum considering the advantages: we could have made wives' investment income separately assessable. It is unfair to discourage women from making their own financial plans by taxing their investment income together with the income of their husbands. I should also like to see an end to the higher rate tax on investment income. I cannot see who would seriously lose by that.

We should also end the higher rate tax on earned income which we call the national insurance contribution. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor is bringing down the rate of tax on investment income to 27 per cent., but the effective rate of tax on earned income up to £15,000 a year is 36 per cent., because there is a 9 per cent. contribution by the employee on top of the income tax, which we call the national insurance contribution. That extra 9 per cent. is collected through the pay-as-you-earn system and has precisely the same impact as income tax. We talk about reducing income tax, but we retain a system in which earned income is penalised because it is taxed at 36 per cent., whereas investment income is taxed at only 27 per cent. That seems to be getting matters entirely wrong.

I should like to go further. I consider we should bring taxation of income to a single standard rate for all types of income. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to contemplate the enormous simplification in the administration of taxation which that reform would make possible and all the ramifications of tax which have grown up over the years since the higher rate tax was introduced. They could all be swept away if we went straight to a single flat rate of tax on all income, whether investment or earned. Substantial prizes would be gained by that reform. I hope that my campaign for it will bear fruit before too long. I first made this recommendation in 1971, when I served on the Finance Bill Standing Committee, and I repeat it now in all seriousness. That should be done after the election when I hope that we again will have a Conservative Government in charge of our affairs. I do not mind if people object to my making this recommendation. I have thought it through and I do not see how anyone could claim that he lost by the fact that people with high incomes were taxed only at the standard rate.

Comments have been made today about directors who take salaries of £500,000 or more out of their companies. It used to be said that, if one wanted to become a millionaire, one should not work on a salary because a man on a salary would never be rich. Undoubtedly, that used to be true, and many of our larger corporations which were run by people on salaries tended to be lacking in entrepreneurial spirit. If it is possible in private business for people to earn substantial incomes which enable them to put capital aside, that is not a bad thing. On the contrary, it is an aspect of the brightening up of our economy which is slowly happening—albeit too slowly in view of the way in which capitalism can and does work in other places.

I am not saying that we want precisely to imitate Hong Kong, but it provides an example. Not only the rich but the poor as well are getting richer in Hong Kong. We are depriving ourselves of the benefits of capitalism by the way in which we operate vindictive taxes which have no real purpose.

If the rates of income tax on all types of income were standardised, it would be likely to imply a rise in the rate of tax on investment income. We should therefore concede a substantial tax-free band of investment income for each taxpayer to compensate fully for the rise in the rate, to stimulate savings and wider share ownership, and to produce a Loi Monory scheme of the most simple kind. I have it in mind that the first £50 a week of investment income should be free of tax. That would give people an incentive to accumulate shares and to provide for themselves by various forms of saving. We should

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encourage the spread of personal wealth and, in particular, help pensioners and old people living on investment income to keep their incomes above the level at which they have to apply for supplementary benefit.

Between 8 million and 9 million people are, in one way or another, dependent on supplementary benefit and other related benefits, and taking account of the housing benefits which are means-tested, 14 million people are dependent on means-tested benefit of one sort or another. That cannot be healthy for the economy, because those people know by instinct that it is not worth taking work or having their own savings, because that would simply rule them out of eligibility for benefit.

All the changes which I recommend would cheapen administration drastically and, within a short time, increase the yield of tax, because the economy would respond to the stimulus. The yield of taxation at the lower rates would be greater than would be taken out by continuing the higher rates of tax, which are charged at the moment.

I apologise if what I say about the redistribution of income echoes what I have said before in the House. I recall the campaigns of Wilberforce and Plimsoll and one of Disraeli's last speeches in which he said:

> "I have begun several things many times and I have often succeeded at last."

In post-Socialist Europe, there will still be an obligation on the members of the economy to give each other mutual support, but how can that be done efficiently? I am attracted by the concept of the redistribution of income as a zero sum whereby the average citizen pays into the public sector insurance system the same amount as he takes out. Over the cycle of life, he should draw support at the beginning and at the end and make his corresponding contribution during his working years.

But the redistribution of income must not be structured or administered in such a way as to provide a drag on the economy, as it now certainly does. That makes it an immediate target for reform because it operates in diametric opposition to the Government's policies of encouraging people to improve their circumstances by work and to provide for their future by saving. If 500,000 or 1 million people were dependent on means-tested benefit, one might say that the system was not working materially to reduce the efficiency of the economy. But when the number goes beyond 10 million, we must recognise that our system for the redistribution of income is counter-productive and wrong. It is extremely expensive to operate. It is unpopular, divisive, easily exploited and, as we all know from our constituency cases, often inadequate in relieving serious poverty.

I should like to repeat the suggestion which I have often made for what I call the BIG idea—the basic income guarantee, which used to be known as the tax-credit scheme. We should hasten to integrate the income tax and the national insurance systems in a tax credit scheme on a revenue-neutral basis. Objections have been made to the tax-credit scheme as it was conceived in the early 1970s, on the ground that it would be too expensive to implement. But a tax credit scheme does not have to be implemented in such a way as to add to the burdens on the economy. The advantages of a tax credit scheme can be obtained on a revenue-neutral basis.

For those in work, the basic income guarantee would replace the income tax allowances bringing pay-as-you-earn to an end and making it possible for most people to calculate their income tax in their heads. For those in need of income support, the basic income guarantee would provide, as I envisage it, about half the amount they are currently entitled to draw in means-tested benefits. That would give claimants the option of continuing to draw the same total amount of benefit as they are entitled to draw now, treating the basic income guarantee as the bottom tranche of entitlement in the same way as child benefit—but if they made that choice it would land them, of course, with all the disadvantages and the humiliation and the disincentive effects of the present system—or they would have the choice of opting for freedom and self-reliance by taking the basic income and, at the same time, looking for work, either part-time or full-time, at low pay or high pay, without committing any crime if they did so and without dropping into hardship. They would have the basic income and their earnings, such as they could get, or the use of their savings, which would secure their independence. It would be a matter of their own choice.

A large number of people, judging from my own inquiries, would prefer to make that choice. They would have freedom from case work and investigation and freedom to keep their savings and personal assets without exposure to any tests of means other than the income tax at a flat rate. That reform would add nothing to the burden on taxpayers. There would in fact, in my view, be likely to be a big reduction in the total outlay on the provision of benefits because many people would prefer to take the half rate—the basic income guarantee—rather than continue to claim supplementary benefits, as they do now. There would be a radical simplification of administration. The black economy would largely be legitimised and brought within the tax net, and the confrontation between the principles on which our free enterprise economy is founded and the systems which we operate for the relief of need would be substantially reduced. Those who are really capable of rejoining the orthodox economy would select themselves to do so, and those who cannot would be no worse off under these proposals than they are now.

I do not want to dwell on too many other suggestions, but I would like to make one or two more particular points. We are now beginning to feel the benefit of much more realistic exchange rates vis-a-vis the Common Market, but we are not likely to adapt our economy quickly enough to gain the benefit of the more realistic rates of exchange unless the Government take certain steps. To encourage investment in manufacture, we should reintroduce initial allowances, and see whether it did not produce another spurt in capital investment in the private sector.

The way must also be found for the private sector to raise capital on indexed bonds in the same way as the Government. If the Government wish to do so, they are able to raise funds with very low outgoings in the early years. I realise that indexation to the retail prices index would be imprudent for many businesses, but there are other forms of indexation which would not be imprudent for business and which could well be devised. But that is not happening in the private sector, although I know from inquiries that I have made that many firms would welcome this facility if it were an option that was on offer by the capital market.

When I inquire why the capital market does not offer substantial funds in the form of indexed bonds, again and again I am told that it is because of difficulties over the tax background. I have tried in successive Finance Bills to make suggestions of my own as to the way in which the tax background could be clarified and eased for the issue of indexed bonds in the private sector, without ever getting a response. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends once again to look into the situation and see what is preventing the private sector from getting the benefits that the Government are able to enjoy by issuing indexed bonds. That is still not happening at present.

To discourage short-termism in the investment policy of tax-exempt pension funds, there is a case for removing from them the exemption from the taxation ofultra-short-term capital gains, which is an anomalous privilege which encourages them to invest simply from month to month or quarter to quarter in the hopes of making quick capital gains rather than to link over the long term to substantial businesses in the hopes of greater benefit over a period of years.

Coming now to pension funds, I think that my right hon. and hon. Friends will have to admit that the announcements that were made in the Budget have not been too successful and that it would be better if they were to reconsider what they have said. We should find a way of obliging funds to pay out full transfer values. I suggested a way in which this could be done during the Report stage of the Finance Bill last year, and I hope that this will be adopted this year, because the inability—or the unwillingness—of private sector schemes to offer genuine full transferability of all accrued values is a disgrace to the occupational pensions movement.

At the same time, one should take off the two thirds maximum limit on benefits. I cannot see that it is helpful. What the Inland Revenue is trying to do in this respect is counter-productive. Why not simply limit the amount of contributions that people can make to tax-exempt funds and put the figure quite high—perhaps even 25 per cent. of earnings as the employer's and employee's combined contributions per annum? I hope that my right hon. Friends will consider that suggestion.

We should attack the issue of the tax-free lump sum by the simple remedy of saying that, for future years, we will phase out the tax exemption; lump sums, in so far as they accrue in future years, should pay the standard rate of tax. That would be a much simpler way of achieving what the Government are trying to do, which is to end the distortion which has crept into the way in which pension funds are operated to obtain the benefit of the total exemption from tax that beneficiaries can claim if they draw their part pension in the form of a lump sum.

Finally, on the tax treatment of Lloyds and the question of tax of reinsurance, I welcome the statement that the Chief Secretary made in opening the debate. If we have a full Committee stage on the Bill, I hope that he will bear in mind the serious concern that has been aroused by the Government's proposals. I am sure that serious concern is well-founded; but the Chief Secretary made some reassuring statements about his attitude which I am sure will be welcome in the City. For the present year, let us say that this is a good Bill which is full of useful things. It is not possible to mention them all, but I wish it a smooth passage through its remaining stages.

8.17 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). His speech was cogent and detailed. Not only did the House follow his speech with great interest but it will read extremely well tomorrow in *Hansard*. He began his speech with a series of statements about personal possessions such as stocks and shares. But it occurred to me that people living in a home that belonged to them, having their walls papered with share certificates but with no job to go to, no good health to enjoy and no proper education for their children might consider that they were the victims of an imbalanced economy. The people of our country would prefer to have work for themselves and their children, good health, a proper Health Service that would cover them, and a proper education. They are essential elements upon which we shall fight the next election.

The hon. Member for Kensington welcomed the Finance Bill and said that it was full of good things to discuss in Committee, I am sure that the Chief Secretary for the Treasury was right when he offered us a good length of time in Committee, going into several sittings well into June and July, so that the Government will have the Bill on the statute book by July and can hold the general election probably in October. We shall wait and see whether that forecast is right.

I enjoyed the speech made by the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) from the Government Back Benches. He mentioned that the maximum rate of income tax in the United States is 28 per cent. Of course, that is the United States federal tax rate and does not include state or sales taxes. I wonder whether even the Chancellor of the Exchequer would wish a situation to exist in which we had a low rate of income tax and a Budget deficit of about $200 billion, rising to $250 billion in 1989. Even the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to give him credit, has not said that he wishes taxes to become low at the expense of the public sector borrowing requirement.

We are always hearing from the Chief Secretary about the base year of 1981, as if there was no Conservative Government in the years 1979-81, in fact as if there was no Government at all. One of the jewels in the crown, as the Government would say, of their seven-year record is their low inflation rate. In fact, the British people pay for that low inflation rate with high interest rates. Those high interest rates keep the exchange rates strong, as the hon. Member for Kensington said. Those high interest rates are the reason why it is strong. They are the highest in Western Europe. The fact that they are high means that every householder in the country pays a higher mortgage rate than he ought to. Those who get domestic credit also have to pay interest rates ranging from 24 per cent. to 30 per cent. Therefore, someone pays for our low inflation rate and that happens to be the householders of our country and those on domestic credit who, as time goes by, find themselves unable to pay the excessive and exorbitant rates asked of them. If one looks at the £24,000 million that has been borrowed on plastic money and has to be repaid at those rates, one can see gathering in the distance a serious problem for our economy.

As all Opposition Members know, the Government's attack on inflation has been essentially three-pronged. Until 1979 every Government in the western world sought to balance inflation with unemployment. One did not want

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to see unemployment shooting away or the benefit of keeping inflation low. This was the only Government in the western world who decided as a matter of policy—they were elected, so they were entitled to do it—to keep inflation low at the expense of unemployment. We have seen the consequences of that since 1979. We know that since 1979 unemployment has risen by 2 million. That is the official figure. Unemployment actually rose from 1·1 million in 1979 to 3·1 million in January 1987.

We have had 19 alterations in the way in which the unemployment figure has been calculated. I almost called them the 19 varieties. In order to get to his 57 varieties even Mr. Heinz had to go through a process of increasing his numbers. The Government have reached 19 varieties in calculating unemployment in our country. In doing so they have reduced the figure by 400,000. Lord Young is seeking to talk down the unemployment figure and suggesting that it may not be lower than three million by the time of the election. The fact is that unemployment is not altering in our country. The way in which it is being calculated may bring it down but in the public perception it is there, it exists like an iceberg in the ocean and it is not going to go away. Every opinion poll shows that high unemployment is a cause of distress among our people and it is the matter that concerns them the most. They know perfectly well that unemployment exists and that the Government do not have a proper policy to bring it down. Even to reduce income tax by 2p in the pound will not bring down the unemployment figure. Whatever else it may do in the economy—it may release money into the economy—it will not bring down the unemployment rate.

Since 1979 we have seen a Government who believe in reducing the manufacturing base of our country and enhancing the service base. However, as we know, as the Americans are finding out and as the Japanese knew a long time ago, the basis of the wealth of a nation is its manufacturing base. The United States is now discovering that it is falling behind Japan as an industrial nation. The strength of a nation lies not in its service industry, which turns money round, but in its wealth creation in the manufacturing sector. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) to whom I listened with great interest referred to Head Wrightson in his constituency, which was closing down. On Teesside 72 foundries have closed down over the past few years. British Steel has seen its work force on Teesside reduced from 25,000 to 7,500. That was not feather-bedding; it was a deliberate act of policy brought about by the Government. ICI reduced its work force by 8,000 and Smiths Dock, the last shipbuilding yard on our Teesside coast, has closed down. That is a direct consequence of a Government saying that manufacturing does not count and that what does count is the service industries.

The money markets, which have the respect of the Chancellor and the Government, will eventually judge us by our performance on the industrial front. They will decide what the value of the pound will be as a consequence of what our industrial strength really is. It cannot be the best idea to run down our manufacturing assets and to create a balance of payments deficit of £2,500 million on our manufactured goods and hope, as the Chief Secretary said earlier, that that can be made up by earnings from interest, profits and dividends.

The Chief Secretary mentioned investment abroad from 1979 of something like £112,000 million, yielding £4,000 million by way of interest, profits and dividends in 1986. As a consequence of that, we see the money and assets of our country being drained away towards a foreign country such as the United States and converted into assets such as the Watergate building, which was bought by the Coal Board pension fund, thereby converting our assets into paper money in America, benefiting the American economy to the loss of our own. If we had invested——

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Would the hon. Gentleman accept that external investment is also the mark of a highly developed economy and that Japan, for example, which the hon. Gentleman admires and talks about so much, invests overseas in even greater proportion than we do?

Mr. Bell: I should like to say three things to the hon. Gentleman. First, I share with him a secret desire and I hope a secret delight. I hope that Bournemouth and Middlesbrough will go up from the third division to the second division at the end of the season. Secondly, may I disillusion the hon. Gentleman somewhat by saying that I am not a great admirer of Japan. I shall come to that. Thirdly, Japan is investing abroad because of its massive credits on its exports. Its exportation of manufactured goods is creating such a huge credit that it has to put the money abroad in order to invest it. There is no prospect of being able to invest that sort of money in its own country. Therefore, we have the peculiar situation of a British Government who refuse to believe that the public sector borrowing requirement can play any part in our own economy. We have seen the figure reduced. A total of 0·75 per cent. of GDP is now being borrowed. The Government borrowing figure for last year is now so low that it is almost insignificant. In fact, I cannot understand why they complain about a Labour policy of investing £6,500 million in the economy when their own public sector borrowing requirement target is £7,000 million for the past financial year. What the Government have done—it has to be put on record and set in context—is that they have sought to raise the same amount of money by the sale of the assets that the nation owns.

When the Government came to office in 1979 the idea of selling off public assets was a doctrinal and ideological matter in which they believed. Again, they won the election so they were entitled to do that. However, what they did not foresee was what a bonanza it would make for the Treasury. They are now able to raise through the City of London something like £8,000 million a year by the sale of public assets. They are selling those assets at less than their fair market value in order to encourage the British public to buy them. That is the sad position that we are in. Would it not be better to use those assets, to borrow against them for the benefit of the whole nation rather than to sell them for the benefit of a few?

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) is in his place again. He mentioned oil tax revenues and their impact on the balance of payments and the fact that oil is no longer being exported in such massive quantities. We see the structure of the Government's financial policy very clearly. We see the sale of public assets raising £8,000 million a year, and we see a high value for the pound, as the hon. Member for

Kensington said, maintained by high interest rates because there is no basic underlying support for the value of the pound, as we see the massive reservoir of unemployed.

All of us, as I mentioned to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury earlier, should take into account the position in the United States of America. The Opposition believe that there will be difficulties for the British economy over the next few months as the balance of payments deficit rises on our manufacturing trade and the consequences of that filter through to the markets. We must also take into account the fact that in the United States the trade deficit for one month was $115,000 million. The federal deficit is $200,000 million and it will rise to $250,000 million in 1989. A protectionist wave in Congress has already touched upon the importations from Japan with a 100 per cent. duty, and that will result in rising interest rates. The Chief Secretary would not rise to the challenge of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who called upon the Chief Secretary to claim that world interest rates were falling. In fact, the Federal Reserve in Ameria is allowing interest rates to rise to defend the value of the dollar.

The position in the United States is perplexing and possibly confusing. It will give rise to some impact on our world trade and our economy. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury acknowledged that in his reply to my earlier intervention. However, he said that the Government had safeguarded the position by keeping our public sector borrowing requirement down and our interest rates high. That is how we are trying to weather the storm. The consequence is that unemployment will not fall in our country. The benefits of the economy that the Government are trying to provide clearly show that there is no benefit, especially to my constituents in Middlesbrough, to those looking for work or trying to better the education for their children.

For those who claim that there is no correlation between high unemployment and a high crime rate, I would stress that Cleveland has the highest unemployment rate in the country on a county basis—about 21 per cent. Cleveland also has the third highest crime rate in the country. There is a clear link between rising unemployment and rising crime.

When the history of these times is written, these will be seen as the years that the locusts ate. They will be the years during which the Thatcherite Government entirely misjudged our economy and the British people. We have heard a lot about opinion polls. The only opinion poll that will count for this Government will be that taken on 7 May when 12 million voters go to the polls. I believe that the result of that poll will ensure that this Finance Bill will have a proper testing on the Floor of the House and in Committee. The Prime Minister will not dare to go to the country in June because the British people will show her what will happen if she does.

8.32 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I believe that the Finance Bill reflects a Budget that was a real hat trick. First, public spending was down by £4·75 billion; second, taxation was down by about £2·25 billion, and, finally, the public sector borrowing requirement was down by some £3 billion to a level of £4 billion, and that represents about 1 per cent. of GDP. I realise that the level of 1 per cent. GDP reflects the proceeds of the privatisation programme. None the less, that is good for Government revenues not only from capital account, but from the revenue account because many of the industrial sectors that have been sold off to the genuine public as opposed to the state were losing money. Now they are profitable and the Government have saved on the revenue account and they have made on the capital account. That is good for the Government and for interest rates in the longer term.

I welcome particularly the profit-related pay measures. I also welcome the cut in the standard rate of tax to 27 per cent. That is a real incentive to a large number—roughly 21 million people. I hope that it portends a move to lower rates yet beginning to mirror the United States. I support a single band of tax for simplicity and I hope that we will achieve that eventually. I think that it is wrong for people to compare our changes with the more sudden movements in the United States and the drop in American tax rates. There are more tax yields in the United States and the Americans can afford to drop their rates fast and still maintain revenues. We are less able to do that here. However, I hope that our tax change portends a real trend.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his Treasury team have listened to the urgings of the oil industry constructively and that the measures taken on oil taxation are good and prudent and will be good for oil production in the United Kingdom. I support the move by the Treasury team from using sterling M3 as a measure to sterling M0. I accept that there has been a growing demand for financial assets and an increasing volatility which makes sterling M3 an unsuitable indicator. However, I also feel—and I have felt for some time—that the money supply is extremely difficult to control if foreign exchange controls are removed and there is a free banking system. I support both of those, but I have always believed that focusing on sterling M3 was wrong and I am pleased that the focus is now on the narrower definition of sterling M0.

At the same time, I really believe that there is genuine concern in the City and elsewhere about the overhang of private sector liquidity and borrowing. This is taking place despite the relatively high level of real interest rates. That is a source of real concern and was correctly taken into account by the Treasury team in their arriving at what I would term a prudent Budget. We must consider that point in future.

I understand the caution that the Chancellor has exercised with regard to interest rate reductions. In view of the overhang of liquidity, the problems with world trade and the risk that oil prices could drop again, therefore eroding our revenues, it is right to be cautious. The price that we pay within these high levels of real interest rates gives some benefit with regard to anti-inflation measures by keeping sterling relatively strong in the general anti-inflationary battle.

I therefore welcome the Chancellor's caution in the face of the risk of a fall in oil prices and in the face of world trade problems. I also welcome it because of the probability that we must estimate whether the Government's revenues will stay as buoyant as they have been in the past year. I absolutely support that cautious, prudent approach in the Budget.

There is a chronic imbalance in world trade. Japan and Germany have massive surpluses while the United States has a massive deficit of about $150 billion. Of course, the United States will have to correct that deficit and there is no easy or pleasant way of doing that. The United States

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must either export more or import less. That has a tremendous potential impact for world trade. I believe that caution and prudence were absolutely correct.

I want briefly to consider the international debt crisis because a solution to that crisis is of vital importance to the continued health of world trade. I understand that the Government have already converted the debts of sub-Saharan countries into grants which is effectively an aid programme. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor at the recent G7 meeting extended that transfer of loans to Third world countries into grants or at least introduced an initiative in that respect. That is a great initiative in the aid programme and shows that this country and the Government are setting a leadership example on the world stage in a comprehensive and practical way by trying to offer a workable solution to the international debt crisis and the maintenance of the health of world trade. Britain now leads the world in that aid programme and more should be done to put that across to the public.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for the measures that he has taken to assist small businesses. As chairman of the Conservative Back Bench small businesses committee, may I say that I and my officers have always been well received by the Treasury team and we were especially glad to see the measures taken in this Budget. The further reduction in corporation tax and the VAT cash option for companies with turnover of less than £250,000 are marvellous measures for small businesses and the VAT cash option especially will do a great deal to help bad debts and late payments. It is and always has been correct for the Government to restore growth in the small business sector even by actively discriminating in favour of small businesses. Just as in nature one always discriminates in favour of the young, whether they be plants or animals, it is right to do the same in economic terms.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In the past three years small businesses employing fewer than 20 people have created a net 1 million real new jobs while larger companies have shed 750,000 jobs. Small businesses are thus making a substantial net contribution to reducing unemployment and, interestingly enough, this is happening faster in the north than in the south. I applaud the many measures that the Government have taken to enhance not only investment in but the conduct of new and smaller businesses. There is still more to be done to reduce the administrative burdens on smaller businesses, but anyone in the small business world and, indeed, anyone looking at the economy will agree that it is far easier to establish and run a new business now than it was in 1979. That is very good for Britain in the long term, and especially for real jobs.

In 1979 the leader of the Liberal party said that the acid test for the new Government would be how they managed the economy. When one considers the economic situation in 1979, it is clear that the test was indeed an acid one. In 1979 we had state controls, disincentives and low morale. Now there is freedom and enterprise. One recalls the endless stop-gos of yesteryear. Now we have a period of steady growth. In place of declining productivity we have increasing productivity. Up to 1979 there were massive state monopolies and state cartels. Those cartels have now been opened to genuine public ownership rather than state ownership and to free competition. Incentives are therefore such that even in old, dying or apparently sick industries such as coal production there have been dramatic increases in productivity and in general morale.

Industry which until 1979 was oriented towards the producer is now oriented to the consumer. Therefore, we are winning increasing shares of world markets. Sales are increasing whereas before 1979 they were falling. The winter of 1978-79 was a time of endless industrial unrest. In the past year we have had the lowest level of worker days lost for 50 years. In 1979 tax rates were rising and Government borrowing was rising. Today tax rates are falling. The top rate of income tax has fallen from 92 per cent. to 60 per cent. and the standard rate from 33 per cent. to 27 per cent. Corporation tax has fallen from 52 per cent. to 35 per cent. and for small businesses from 42 per cent. to 27 per cent. At the same time, Government revenues have been rising and Government borrowing has fallen to 1 per cent. of GDP over three years. That is an outstanding record. In 1979 overseas assets were valued at about 7 per cent. of GDP. The figure is now 28 per cent., diversifying the security of our earnings throughout the world trade.

In 1979 employment was declining. Now it is rising at the fastest rate in Europe and unemployment is falling faster in the north than in the south. This is not due to gimmicks such as pumping money into jobs that do not really exist. These are real jobs, with the result that inflation, which was high in 1979, is now low and likely to average about 4·2 per cent. this year. The really interesting aspect, however, is that that low level of inflation has been achieved together with a high growth rate—the highest growth rate in G5. In the old days, high growth meant high inflation and reducing inflation brought the growth rate down, but the Government have succeeded in decoupling the two aspects so that we now have high growth and low inflation. That is a very great achievement.

In 1979 we had the British disease. Now we have the British economic miracle. In 1979 the leader of the Liberal party said that the acid test would be the Government's conduct of the economy. This Budget and this Finance Bill are prudent and a testimony to the fact that the acid test has been met outstandingly well over a measured period of years. I therefore willingly extend to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and to the Treasury team my heartiest congratulations on what I believe is just one more measure in a great success story.

8.47 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Listening to the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and, indeed, many of the Tory speeches, we have heard a very selective presentation of the state of the British economy. I was gratified to note that the hon. Member for Winchester quoted twice in his speech the same comment of my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party. Perhaps that is a measure of the marginal nature of the hon. Gentleman's constituency. In reality, between 1979 and 1981 the Government failed the acid test. In the past few weeks they have constantly reminded us of the winter of discontent, but they have chosen not to remind us of the two years of monetarist mayhem which followed their election and resulted in whole chunks of our manufacturing industry being torn out by the roots, and brought about a degree of devastation on British manufacturing industry from which we are only now recovering. The Government say that the recovery statistics are impressive,

but they need to be impressive if the economy is to recover from the damage inflicted on it in the first two years of Conservative rule following 1979.

We must consider exactly what priorities the Government are now offering the country. I should like to dwell for a moment on the clear choice that faced them in this Budget and the path that they chose to take and which we oppose. The Conservatives claim that tax cuts are very effective in creating jobs, but there is no evidence whatever to support that contention. In fact, the opposite is the case. The job creation effect of a 2p cut in income tax is small compared with the effects that that money could produce in jobs if it was targeted differently.

The Government's priority of reducing taxes would also be defensible if the public knew that there was no work that needed to be done. However, the public know that a great deal needs to be done. There is a need, for example, to provide for the care of our increasing elderly population, to provide them with care in the community such as home helps and home nursing. There is a need to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped into the community. That is something to which the Government claim that they are committed, but for which adequate resources are not available. The whole provision of health care rightly causes concern when in my own part of Scotland—the north-east—it is acknowledged that we are up to £50 million under-funded on the health budget. Even if the figure is disputed, the Government themselves admit that there is substantial under-funding and that the SHARE formula in Scotland will take several years more than was forecast to reach any sort of equity.

Therefore, it is not as if there is not a clear indication of what is required. There is a need for investment in education at all levels, and for investment in our infrastructure, in, for example, the electrification of the east coast railway line, plans for which currently stop at Edinburgh. There are no plans to extend it to Aberdeen. That gives us great cause for concern because when the line is electrified to Edinburgh that could lead to a reduced railway service to Aberdeen, rather than to improvement. All those things need to be done. The House knows of them and all hon. Members can draw their own list of priorities.

I suggest to the Government that even Tory voters, or I should say former Tory voters, those who voted Tory last time, must question whether the tax cuts that they are being offered in the Budget will make them personally better off. They will calculate that the benefit of getting those tax cuts will not even pay the premium for the private health care that they will increasingly have to take out because the National Health Service cannot provide the care that they had previously come to expect. It will not go anywhere near the cost of private education if they feel that they are unable to maintain their children in the state system. It is worth reminding the Government that probably three quarters of Conservative voters send their children to state schools and they know the problems facing them in terms of inadequate funding. They will have to consider whether they want their children to go on to further and higher education and the increased cost of that, in circumstances where support for colleges, universities and grants is effectively being cut in real terms.

I suggest somewhat lightheartedly that when those voters reflect on that, they might come to the conclusion that their tax cuts could be better invested by putting them into the campaign fund for the alliance to ensure that this Government are removed in favour of a Government who will give priority to the services that those voters know they need, but which the Government are clearly set against providing. I suggest that they should consider that the Finance Bill does nothing to reduce regional and national disparities. It does not address the problems that many of us know, or the specifics of individual projects which are failing or to the closures that still continue to bedevil the Scottish economy in particular but also many other parts of the country. I refer to the specific instance of a Unilever factory in my constituency, Lawsons of Dyce. It is being closed by Unilever, which is also to close two other factories in England. The company will receive about £4 million of Government grant to build a new factory in Corby with a net destruction of about 1,000 jobs, of which nearly 600 will be in my constituency.

That is the sort of anomaly that the Government could have faced up to. Such is the problem with the Caterpillar company, where the workers have continued their occupation of the factory. The circumstances are that the company has received substantial benefits from the British taxpayer, but now seeks to pull out in a breach of faith. It hopes to take those assets, some of which have been acquired with the help of British taxpayers, out of the country and to avoid tariff duties by having them treated as secondhand equipment. Such anomalies should have been tackled.

I shall briefly mention the North sea tax changes, which have been referred to by one or two of hon. Members. I welcome the breach of the ring fence principle and the fact that there is a tax allowance for money going into research. However, the Government have deluded themselves if they believe that the measure of concession that has been agreed of 10 per cent. to be allowed against new developments is anything like enough to make any significant difference to investment in the North sea. Indeed, the Chancellor said that the allowance was specifically calculated so that it would not make viable after the changes any field that had not been viable before.

One wonders about the point of introducing tax changes that are specifically designed to have no effect. However, that is exactly what the Government have done, and they will be able to claim no credit for any recovery that takes place in the North sea as a result of those tax changes. We need more significant tax changes if we are to achieve a significant increase in activity. That is important not only to the north-east of Scotland but to the Scottish economy as a whole and that of the north of England, which is suffering from the lack of North sea orders.

I shall refer to just two other areas because time is short. The Finance Bill has proposed changes in VAT regulations as they affect small businesses. They have generally been welcomed and I wish to welcome them also. However, the Government should also recognise that they have not lifted the burden on small business as they claimed they would, but, in a number of ways, they have increased the administrative burden on them, for example, through statutory sickness benefit and by a whole variety of administrative burdens which must be faced. The cost to small businesses of implementing the administration of payroll tax changes can lead to the need for new software for a microcomputer, or, in some cases, to the need for a new microcomputer to cope with those changes. There is

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

no Government assistance for such a consequence. The Government should address themselves to the implications of those changes as they affect small businesses.

In reading the Select Committee's report, another interesting thing is the lack of precision that exists in the Treasury on exactly where the revenue is going. We were told that the Treasury was quite unable to forecast the revenues for the next few months. Indeed, just before Christmas the Chancellor said that he ruled out the possibility of tax cuts. However, three months later he had enough money to provide a 2p in the pound cut that could not have been anticipated.

One wonders where the economy is going when the Treasury admits to the Select Committee how ill-equipped it is to forecast the future. When asked to explain why there was such an excess of profits, the Treasury assumed that it was because it had not forecast the increased profitability in the finance sector. That brings us full circle because it implies that the Government's buoyancy from revenues is directly attributable to the increase in borrowing in the private sector. We have now reached the position where public sector borrowing is down to 1 per cent. of GNP, but private sector borrowing has increased to more than 10 per cent. of GNP. The charges that are being paid on the interest of that private borrowing is improving the profitability of the financial sector. No wonder the Governor of the Bank of England sees that as a looming, glacial, overhanging liquidity which could come crashing down when the thaw comes.

Clearly, the Government hope that the Finance Bill will dress the window in advance of the forthcoming general election. The speeches of Conservative Members have been clear rehearsals of what they hope will go down well in their constituencies at the start of the election campaign. They may sound fine here and they may look good when they are read in the local paper, but at the general election hon. Members must stand before an audience of their constituents who are aware of the Government's shortcomings and the other side of the argument, who realise the cost of the Government's policies in terms of unemployment, the neglect of our infrastructure and the problems in health and education, and who will realise that the Tory Government's priorities are not right for the British people, that there is an alternative and that the time has come to change to it.

8.59 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to put several proposals to the Minister on the credit union movement and I should be grateful if he would respond to them.

The Budget and Finance Bill do little or nothing for my constituents, about 33,000 of whom depend on social welfare payments — that is over 40 per cent. of those whom I represent. while I do not wish to make any predictions about the general election, I hope to continue to represent those people. The Scottish Office offers the sop of the Inverclyde initiative, which is a so-called privately led enterprise project. I do not think that Scottish Office Ministers take it seriously, because if they did, they would have to acknowledge that it cannot even touch the problems facing my constituents. The overwhelming majority of people in Scotland mistrust the Government and their Scottish representatives. Whatever happens south of the border, that will be made evident on election day.

The Bill does not mention assistance for the credit union movement. Clauses 31 and 32 deal with friendly societies, but there is not a word about the credit union movement, which is a matter of deep regret. In my constituency the Greenock East credit union has more than 700 shareholders who can obtain loans ranging from £75 to £300. It is a splendid, heart-warming example of a self-help bank in an area ravaged by unemployment and poverty. Of the 60-odd credit unions found in Great Britain, fully 21 are situated in Scotland and they have assets of about £1·25 million. This wholly admirable movement needs Government help to deal with the problems that bedevil it. I stress that I am not making a plea for financial assistance.

I received a letter from Dr. Ray Donnelly, director of communications of the Association of British Credit Unions, in which he states:

"our main problem is that the shares and loans limits have not been increased since 1979. Thus established Credit Unions are now in a position of having to refuse savings from their members because they have reached the £2,000 share limit."

Will the Minister give serious consideration to increasing that savings limit from £2,000 to, for example, £5,000?

Dr. Donnelly continues:

"This is a preposterous situation for a government which is sworn to uphold the principle of deregulation. Deregulation only seems to apply to their friends and not the working class movements."

One such credit union is the Strathclyde Passenger Transport credit union which is largely made up of bus drivers, ancillary workers and Glasgow underground workers. That union is telling some of its shareholders that they cannot invest another penny because they have reached the upper limit of £2,000. That is an absurdity and I appeal to the Minister to look closely at this ridiculous state of affairs.

The Credit Unions Act 1979 is, in many important respects, badly out of date; it needs changing, so that credit unions can grow. The 1979 Act was the first legal recognition of credit unions in Britain. Its aim was to regulate the performance of credit unions, and at the same time protect the interests of their members. At the time of the passing of the Act many members of the credit unions thought that it was a good Act. Even with 1987 hindsight, it was a good piece of legislation. There was no Division on Second Reading and there was a good deal of all-party support for the Act. However, there are problems.

The 1979 Act imposed strict limits on what a credit union could do. Those limitations included a maximum membership of 5,000 people; a limited shareholding of £2,000; and a maximum loan of £2,000. The maximum dividend rate of 8 per cent. remained until 1985. There is a maximum charge on loans of 1 per cent. per month, which equals 12·68 annual percentage rate. The longest repayment period was two years for an unsecured loan and five years for a secured loan.

The effect of these regulations was to place credit unions in a tight, tough framework of controls. Little was left for the individual credit union to decide. Restrictions were drawn up which reflected the composition and nature of the credit union movement at that time. I remind the House that in 1979 the average credit union had a membership of 154 people, with an average shareholding

of £95. Today, credit unions average about 300 members with average shareholdings of approximately £200 — roughly double the figure of 1979.

A more important fact is concealed in those figures. Of the 72 credit unions which are affiliated to the Association of British Credit Unions, 16 control almost 80 per cent. of the assets of the movement. I appeal to the Minister to change these regulations. It is the larger and expanding groups of credit unions that feel the greatest hardship under the current unreformed legislation.

At present, six police federations are starting credit unions, including the West Midlands police federation, the Greater Manchester police federation and the Strathclyde police federation. They intend to operate with savings levels of some £40 per month, but I think that we can predict that many officers will save more. This is a vastly different type of movement from that which existed when the 1979 Act was introduced.

The following changes are needed. The individual shareholding should be increased to £5,000. It was £2,000 in 1979, so it is eminently reasonable, particularly for the bigger credit unions, that that shareholding should be increased to £5,000. At present, membership is limited to 5,000 people. No credit union in the United Kingdom exceeds 2,500 members, but certain groups are growing, and the development of local authority credit unions and police federation credit unions shows that the time may be ripe to consider raising this figure. At the time of the 1979 Act, the largest credit union in Great Britain had approximately 250 members. Now, the largest has some 2,500 members.

The level of loans should be raised as well. It is essential to do this. A not unreasonable amount in 1987 could be £5,000. The period of repayment could be extended. The maximum period over which loans are repayable should be extended to 60 months on all loans. Many members of credit unions own their own homes and would like to use their credit unions to finance home improvements and car purchase. To this end, a five-year repayment term should be made available, without the need for a second mortgage.

Nothing in these proposals would compel credit unions to accept changes that they deem inadvisable or inappropriate. They are proposed to facilitate the development of larger credit unions. These are necessary changes which will encourage the growth of the credit union movement. I am sure that there can be no disagreement in the House about this movement. Apart from anything else, a prosperous and lively credit union can do much in an impoverished area such as East Greenock or Port Glasgow. It can keep at bay that most dreadful of parasites, the moneylender. We are seeing such people in East Greenock and other working-class communities.

The Minister, with his usual lack of grace, is ignoring what I am saying. I am appealing on behalf of these co-operative banks, and the proposals that I have made are entirely reasonable. The 1979 Act was fine legislation. Today, in 1987, it is badly out of date.

9.12 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): When the Chief Secretary opened this debate, he painted a glowing picture of the economy. One would have thought from it that there was nothing to complain about in the way in which the Government have managed the economy in the past eight years. However, it was significant that throughout his speech he did not mention unemployment once. That was an amazing omission from the opening speech from the Government Front Bench in the debate on the Finance Bill, in which the Minister describes the Government's management of the economy. It was also revealing, because it showed clearly that the Government have simply written off the unemployed. They have decided that they do not matter, that they are invisible and that their votes will not count in the forthcoming general election. That is the way in which the Government quite plainly view the unemployed, and that view is reinforced by the fact that nothing in the Finance Bill assists the unemployed.

Labour Members face the hopelessness and the despair of the unemployed in our advice surgeries and we deeply sympathise with it. Their plight makes us determined to win the next election because we know that only our party has the answer and it is only the Labour party in government that would seek to bring the unemployed figures down rather than juggling with them.

It is not only among the unemployed that we see such despair. We know that among those who are in employment there is a fear that, although they are in work now, they are unsure how long those jobs will last. The other day I visited ship repairers in my constituency and that fear was plain. The ship repairers not only face that fear, but know full well of the Government's total unwillingness to do anything to assist ship repairers in my constituency at Tilbury docks. There are certain measures that could be taken that would lead to developments and the booming of that particular industry in Tilbury, but nothing has been done. Even the manufacturers who are doing well in Thurrock find that there is no prospect of increasing employment in their factories. Therefore, there is no hope for young people seeking jobs or for those young people who may be seeking apprenticeships. The fear of unemployment is still rife in this country, but the Chief Secretary had nothing to say about it.

The Chief Secretary turned on us and said that the Labour party had painted a black picture of the economy. It seems to me that he has not read his Red Book that was published along with the Budget. There are two revealing tables in that Red Book that make the Government's prospects for the economy clear.

One table considers visible trade and makes it clear that the Government expect little increase in the volume of exports in this year. Once again, not only will import volume increase this year on last year, but imports will outstrip exports. The increase in import volume is expected to be 7 per cent. but the forecast for the increase in the volume of exports is only 4 per cent. That is the truth that the Government face in their Red Book and that is clearly spelt out. We should also consider the forecasts for the current account. We discover that the Government expect that, in 1987, there will be a £8 billion deficit in manufactured goods and an overall deficit of £2·5 billion.

Those are significant features in the economy and are ones that the Government hope the public will not notice. They represent worrying signs for the future of the British economy. However, in his opening remarks the Chief Secretary had nothing to say about them. Certainly there is nothing about those features either in the Budget speech or the Finance Bill — nothing that will enable us to reduce the forecast deficit or increase exports and reduce the volume of imports. The Chief Secretary said nothing

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

about that and showed no concern about the serious and growing deficit in manufactured goods — £8 billion expected this year, £5·5 billion last year and £3 billion in 1985. That represents a rapidly growing deficit in manufactured goods and one that the country cannot continue to sustain. However, no concern has been shown about that and it has all been swept aside.

Instead, the Chief Secretary talked about the Chancellor's hat-trick of allegedly achieving tax cuts, increased spending and reduced borrowing. However, once again when one examines closely this hat-trick it is clear that, despite the Chief Secretary's expertise, such a hat-trick cannot be achieved. It is impossible to make that combination and, indeed, the Chancellor in his Budget did not make that combination.

When the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor talk about spending being increased, all that they mean is that spending has increased this year over their plans to cut public spending last year. Indeed, public spending as a proportion of GDP has changed little between this year and last year. Again the Government's Red Book shows that. As regards tax cuts, we all know full well that, as a proportion of GDP, taxes have not fallen. Indeed, the figures clearly show that general Government receipts were up by £3 billion on the expectations set out in last year's Red Book.

Of course, in the forthcoming year, general Government receipts will increase again. Therefore, in effect, taxes have not been cut. Borrowing is at roughly the same proportion of GDP. The spending plans are just trying to pull a rabbit out of the hat. There is no serious increase in public spending and there is certainly not the increase in public spending that would make a real difference to the economy or increase employment opportunities.

The Government have made it clear that taxes for most people have increased over the years since 1987-79. All the figures show that clearly. A couple with two children on average earnings, and equally a single person on average earnings, find that the percentage of their income taken by direct taxes — income tax and national insurance — has increased from 20·9 per cent. in 1978-79 to 21·9 per cent. in 1986-87. If all taxes are taken into account, including VAT duties and rates, that proportion has increased from 35 per cent. to 38·5 per cent. of the income of a family on average earnings.

There has been a 2p cut in the basic rate. The fall in the basic rate since 1978-79 has been offset by a fall in the relative value of child benefit, the increases in the proportion of spending liable to VAT, the doubling of VAT and the rising burden of rates as the rate support grant has been cut. I represent part of the county of Essex, where the rates have increased by 10 per cent. That is due entirely to the cut in rate support grant. We have no loony Labour Left council. It is in fact a hung council of Tories and Liberals. Nevertheless, each year for the past eight years the county council has written to all the Essex Members of Parliament and asked them to plead with the Government not to cut the rate support grant. It made a special plea this year, which was ignored by the Government, not to cut a further £6 million off the rate support grant. To get the burden of taxation back to the level of 1978-79, the Government would have had to reduce the basic rate in this Budget to about 23·5p in the pound or to cut the rate of VAT to 5 per cent. Neither of those options was taken up by the Chancellor.

What I find amazing, although I suppose I should be used to it by now, is the Government's behaviour. Time after time, Ministers talk about tax cuts. They say that the tax burden has been reduced, and so on, yet when I tabled questions, which the Financial Secretary kindly answers in great detail, I find that every answer that he gives entirely contradicts that. His answers contradict what he will say at the Dispatch Box shortly, what the Chief Secretary tells us and what the Chancellor tells us. I refer in particular to the answers given at column *311* on 27 March 1987, where the Financial Secretary goes into great detail. Page after page of statistics show the percentage taken from various levels of income for single people, married couples with no children, married couples who are both working, married couples with two children, and so on. We find that in each case the percentage of tax and national insurance taken from gross earnings has increased since 1978-79, until we get near the end of the table. Then the percentages begin to fall. If, for example, we take a person who is earning well over £1,000 a week, we find a substantial fall for a married couple with two children from 49 per cent. to 43 per cent.—and so it goes on.

Every single figure that the Government are prepared to put on record in their written answers contradicts the claims made by those same Government Ministers — aped by their Back Benchers — in one speech after another. At a net cost to the Exchequer of £1·6 billion, only 24 per cent. of the population have gained and 59 per cent. of taxpayers have lost, even before the effect of increases in indirect taxes has been felt.

It is painfully clear from every figure that one examines that the rich have benefited at the expense of those on average or below average earnings. Two pence off the standard rate will make no difference. What could make a difference to many families up and down the land would be to meet the real needs of those families by a substantial increase in child benefit at one end of the scale, and by increases in the pension for married and single pensioners. That is why we have committed ourselves to those sorts of increases—because we know full well that the resources that the Chancellor has squandered by taking 2p off the standard rate should be used for child benefit and increases in pensions to meet the needs of those who most seriously require help from the Government. That is why we made that decision and why we would not waste that 2p off the standard rate in the way in which the Chancellor did.

In his opening speech, the Chief Secretary proudly mentioned that there had been virtually no increase in indirect taxes. The real damage on that score was done by the Chancellor's predecessor. Poorer families have paid for it in the past and still pay for it now. The average household now pays one fifth of its total income in indirect taxes. The poorest 10 per cent. of households, on £3,500 a year, pay one quarter of their income in indirect taxes. The richest 10 per cent. pay only about one-sixth of their income in indirect taxes. That shows clearly the regressive nature of indirect taxes.

Nevertheless, in the past, the Government almost doubled VAT and, despite no increases in this Budget, the poorest families are paying most heavily. If the Government are re-elected, they will use the forthcoming EC court decisions as an excuse to slap 15 per cent. VAT

on books, gas, electricity, water and new build. There is every reason to believe that the Chancellor would not hesitate to do that. Not only have the Government doubled VAT in the past, but the Chancellor has shown no hesitation whatever in extending the VAT base. He quite happily extended it, for example, to take-away food, a move that the Opposition opposed, knowing full well that poor families often rely on cheap and nutritious take-away meals. Adding 15 per cent. to such meals merely added to the burden of indirect taxes on such people.

The EC decisions that will be made at the end of this year will give the Government, if they are re-elected, the opportunity to say, "Sorry, we cannot help it. The EC says we must do this". So on the tax will go, the Chancellor will rake in yet more VAT and will then, if the Tory Government are re-elected, use those receipts in later Budgets, perhaps, to cut the basic rate of taxation. That is because the Government's commitment and policy is less direct taxation and more indirect taxation. Why is this? The reason is that the better-off a family is the less hit it will be by indirect taxation. It is a regressive form of taxation and we know that it is entirely in line with the Government's stated policy and their preference for indirect taxation. Their willingness has been shown over repeated Budgets to tax the poor to reduce the burden of taxation on the rich. That is entirely in line with Government thinking and it will be convenient to use the EC's decision to justify their actions. We hear about the internal market and the pressure that has been applied by Lord Cockfield as the EC Commissioner. We know also that if the Government are re-elected they plan to impose VAT on food. This is part of the Government's commitment to the EC, and it is all part of their commitment to indirect taxation. That is entirely what we expect the Government to do.

The Chief Secretary talked about profit-related pay and said that it was not a panacea for all the ills that are faced by industry. I listened with interest because in the absence of any other policy to assist industry we must regard profit-related pay as the only policy that the Government have for industrial development.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has doubled the tax relief available for profit-related pay from the amount suggested in the Green Paper of July 1986, but there are conditions on profit-related pay schemes. At least 80 per cent. of employees must take part in a scheme for it to qualify and the prospect must be that if profits remain unchanged the total profit-related pay will be at least 5 per cent. of the payroll of those taking part. I do not want to go into the details of the conditions because they will be matters for debate when we consider the Bill in Committee.

I want instead to draw attention to the cost of profit-related pay. It could cost at least £500 million, and it is more likely to cost £1 billion. That is a lot of money to spend on the scheme when it is fully under way, depending on the number of applicants willing to take part in the scheme. There have been many estimates of a cost of £1 billion, and, as I have said, that is a great deal to spend on one scheme that is designed to assist industry. We need to be sure that the scheme will achieve the objectives that have been set for it.

The scheme derives from the ideas of an American economist called Martin Weitzmann, who thought that it was the single solution for all industry's problems. He considered that it would solve the problems of unemployment and inflation at a stroke. Those are high claims to be made for one scheme and I doubt whether the Government would suggest that all of that could be fulfilled merely by introducing the scheme. Nevertheless, the Government no doubt believe that it will so involve employees in the company for which they work that it will motivate them to work harder, and that that in itself will assist industry. They probably believe also that it will encourage employees to accept lower wages and thereby increase employment opportunities. It is argued that the lower wages costs become the more likely employers are to take on more labour. Those would be the justifications for the scheme which the Government would have in mind. However, there are difficulties. People whose wages are already low will be encouraged to run the risk of having them lowered again if the company for which they work fails to make a profit and makes a loss instead.

There are also important questions to be asked about the relationship between the scheme and the benefits system—family income supplement, for example. Family income supplement is paid on a six-monthly basis, while profit-related pay will be worked out on a three-monthly basis. How will the low paid, who may have to face a cut in pay and may therefore need family income supplement and become eligible for it, be dealt with by the benefit system? That is an important question. I do not expect the Minister to answer it when he winds up, but it should be considered carefully during the Committee stage.

Secondly, how will we determine the size of the profits? What part will the employees have to play in determining what counts as a profit and what counts against it? No answers have been given to questions such as that.

The Opposition's main objection to the scheme, however, is that it is not radical enough. It should be accompanied by the granting to employees of a real say in the running of their companies. If employees are intended to take a share of the profits and to lose if their company fails to be profitable, they should be properly involved in the running of that company, and should have a real say and responsibility.

The scheme also gives employees no stake in the capital growth of the business. Other schemes, such as the employee share ownership schemes to which the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) referred, and which we include among our aims to achieve social ownership, would give employees a real stake in the capital growth of their businesses: they would give them something to work for. We might then see a change in the commitment of employees to their companies, and in the growth of the profitability of those companies. However, the Government's offering is not a radical scheme at all. The trade unions are right to be suspicious of the Government's motives, and to feel that the scheme probably has much more to do with holding down wages than with sharing wealth.

The suspicions of the Labour party and the trade unions are well justified. One Finance Bill after another introduced by the Government has done nothing whatever to encourage the sharing of wealth. All that successive Finance Bills have done is to encourage the further concentration of wealth by altering the rules of inheritance tax and abolishing capital transfer tax, and to increase the incomes of the wealthy. Meanwhile, the number of families living in poverty has grown to seven million.

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

Those families are entirely disregarded in the Bill; but it is for them that we are concerned, and it is those whom we are determined to assist when we are in government.

9.38 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): For a debate that was widely billed in the press as the beginning of the Opposition's fight back, this has been a curiously quiet and ill-attended occasion—on both sides, admittedly. It is the fight back that never happened. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is always listened to with respect, and he always makes an interesting speech, but I think that all who have heard his speech today will agree that it was somewhat disappointing. We heard hardly a word from him about the Finance Bill. We listened to a general speech about the economy, but the hon. Gentleman expressed no views about important issues in the Finance Bill, such as personal pensions—a very considerable innovation that will affect retirement provision for years to come.

Furthermore, only during the dying minutes of the speech by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) did we hear a word about what must by any standards be an important innovation—profit-related pay. The hon. Member for Dagenham did not mention it. He was not interested in addressing the details of the Bill. All that we had from the Opposition were scares a-plenty. The scare of 1983, which proved to be wrong, was repeated—that the Government are planning VAT increases to fund direct tax cuts.

I repeat that these allegations are fanciful. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have denied them repeatedly, firmly and publicly. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has written a letter to Mr. Lomas, the Labour Member of the European Parliament. Such scare stories show how desperate the Opposition are to distract attention from their own policies. The Labour party is desperate to put up a smoke screen to hide the fact that the Conservative party is the party of lower taxation and that the Labour party is the party of higher taxation. *[Interruption.]* It is very good to hear the Opposition laughing when we say that the Conservative party is the party of lower taxation.

Dr. McDonald: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute.

For years the Labour party voted down what it attacked as Tory tax cuts. Now, at the last minute before the election, it is turning round and saying that they were not tax cuts, after all; they were tax increases.

Dr. McDonald *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall deal with the hon. Lady in a minute.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) referred to pension schemes in relation to additional voluntary contributions, to the lump sum and to schemes that had been submitted but had not been approved on Budget day. Where a pension scheme had applied for but had not received approval from the superannuation funds office before Budget day, it will be treated in the same way as a scheme that had been fully approved, provided of course that approval is subsequently given. That treatment will apply to those who were members of a scheme before Budget day. People who have been added to it since will be dealt with under the new rules. Nobody, therefore, who was in such a scheme before 17 March will be disadvantaged.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) referred to the amalgamation of capital gains and corporation tax as it applies to the corporate sector—in particular, to how it applies to the life assurance business. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary explained that we had considered this point very carefully and had decided not to exempt the life assurance industry. However, talks will continue and this matter will be considered in Committee.

My right hon. Friend referred in particular to two points. First, he asked whether the legislation would be retrospective. I suppose that all changes in the rate of capital gains tax could be described as having a retrospective effect, but the event that will crystallise the liability is prospective, not retrospective.

My right hon. Friend also referred to the effect on policies. There will be an increase in taxation, but we believe that broadly it will have a relatively small effect. Policy holders' funds in life assurance companies probably total about £50 billion, 30 per cent. of which is in gilts, while £35 billion is in property and equities. If that proportion stood at 25 per cent. over indexed book costs in all life companies, there would be an addition of 0·4 per cent. to their taxable funds. That is a point to which we can return, but I hope that what I have said will be of some interest to my right hon. Friend.

The Finance Bill contains provisions that relate to the business expansion scheme. I said in the Budget debate that we were examining the statement of practice issued by the Inland Revenue of what a ship-chartering company has to do to satisfy the business expansion scheme requirement that it has to trade wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom. As I explained, there was some doubt about what had to be done to satisfy that requirement. I am pleased to announce that, following consultations with the General Council of British Shipping, the Inland Revenue is to issue a revised statement of practice tomorrow. I know that the GCBS believes that that will be helpful and that, by providing greater certainty as to whether the conditions can be met, it will help ship chartering companies to raise finance under the business expansion scheme.

Much of the debate has been taken up with the Finance Bill. The hon. Member for Dagenham was not interested in its contents. He complained that the Bill did not mention monetary policy, and I found myself racking my memory to recall one that did. It was difficult to recognise the hon. Gentleman's description of the British economy. He is beginning to be affected by his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who is a distinguished romantic essayist. That is his literary forte, and I have a copy of his essays at home. The right hon. Gentleman is somewhat less skilled and informed in the horror comic approach to the economy.

The hon. Member for Dagenham talked about unemployment. No one denies that unemployment is a problem, but we deny the impression painted by the hon. Gentleman of an economy that is stagnant, in which investment is not rising and where the prospects for exports are not very good. By asserting that again and again the Labour party does not only the country but itself

a disservice. Some of us are not disinterested in the state of the Labour party. Perhaps I might offer a little friendly advice. The Labour party would do much better if it said to the public, "Yes. There are many aspects of the economy that have improved. That is all the more reason why we should make different choices and build upon what has been achieved."

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) tried to warn the Opposition. Under the headline "Labour should stop crying wolf" the hon. Gentleman wrote in *The Guardian* on 17 March:

"the actual prospect is rosier; an opportunity for growth, rather than the prelude for the disaster for which we have so assiduously prepared . . . So far from slipping into a balance of payments disaster, Britain is probably riding a J-curve. Exports are rising, imports, currently, are not. Manufacturing is becoming more buoyant."

Mr. Gould: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a moment. If the hon. Gentleman will not believe me, perhaps he would like to take the advice of *The Economist*, which pointed out on 4 April:

"Job ads in the *Manchester Evening News* are 15 per cent. up on a year ago. Construction firms, even in cities with as many jobless as Sheffield, are beginning to find difficulty in recruiting skilled workers. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce, surveying 3,400 firms, says business confidence in four parts of northern England—Yorkshire and Humberside, the north-east, Greater Manchester and Merseyside—is above the national average".

The Economist concluded that the recovery was definite, strong, and beginning to spread to those parts of the economy that it had hitherto not reached.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister adhere to the Treasury's forecast of an £8 billion deficit in trade and manufactures this year?

Mr. Lamont *rose*——

Mr. Randall: Answer yes or no.

Mr. Lamont: Of course we adhere to that forecast. The hon. Gentleman knows that our current account position has been extremely strong. Some deterioration in the balance of payments is only to be expected after the price of oil has been halved. However, the deterioration is small and marginal compared with the balance of payments disaster that we experienced under the Labour Government. If the hon. Member for Dagenham will not believe me or his own supporter, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, let him heed the words of Mr. Christopher Smallwood, the economics editor of *The Sunday Times*. The hon. Member for Dagenham may be put off because Mr. Smallwood has been known occasionally to write speeches for the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). I understand that Mr. Smallwood has been a policy adviser to the SDP. On the economy, he said:

"the picture is one of . . . rising demand for industry's products, particularly from overseas, of adequate capacity in the short term and an upturn in investment for further expansion in the longer term. In short it is a picture of a continuing 'productivity miracle'. Sooner or later, Britain will realise that it once again possesses a successful industrial economy."

Exactly like the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, Mr. Smallwood did not hesitate to give advice to the Labour party. He said:

"if Kinnock and Hattersley are not to sound like generals fighting the last war, they have to present the problems of unemployment and social stress, not as the product of industrial failure, which they are not, but as the spin off from industrial success, which a caring society should wish to do something about.

That is more difficult to get across, but Labour does not help its cause by pretending economic disaster is around the corner when the evidence of a sustained industrial recovery is all around."

That was the evidence of Mr. Smallwood. Although he may have been a former adviser to the SDP, it is a pity that his advice has not reached the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth).

Even if the Opposition do not believe me, their hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby or the economics editor of *The Sunday Times*, why do they not believe the CBI? CBI survey after CBI survey has shown that the outlook for industry and for manufacturing industry is better than it has been for many years. The CBI will not take anything other than an impartial and dispassionate view, and it said that the prospects for the British economy are better than they have been for many years.

Many hon. Members will have been astonished, as I was, by the Labour party's decision to choose the burden of tax as something with which to attack the Government in this debate. Bereft of all other arguments, Labour Members cling to that, although some people might think that it was something of an own goal for a party that is committed to high spending and high taxes. But apparently things are better seen in perspective standing on one's head. The Labour party intends to vote against the income tax reductions in the Finance Bill and is committed to reversing those measures, yet at the same time it is arguing that taxes are too high, and it reverts to its latest favourite theme, the burden of tax.

It is difficult for anyone, except perhaps a member of the Salvation Army, to believe in overnight conversions. It is a new ploy for the Opposition and is about as convincing as their conversion to the cause of law and order. It is a pity that they did not think of it a bit earlier —during all those years when they have been voting against Tory tax cuts. Now the Opposition tell us that they were not tax cuts but tax increases. If cutting the rate of tax from 33p to 27p, if increasing personal allowances by 22 per cent. more than the rate of inflation to the highest real level since the second world war, and if taking 1½ million people out of taxes is not cutting taxes, I do not know what is.

Dr. McDonald: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us which statement he believes? Does he believe the one that he just made, that the burden of taxation—direct tax and national insurance contributions—has fallen, or does he believe the written answers which he gives, which are recorded in *Hansard* and which he signs as Financial Secretary to the Treasury? Which of the two does the right hon. Gentleman believe? They contradict each other.

Mr. Lamont: I am extremely grateful for the opportunity clearly to make the point to the hon. Member for Thurrock that, of course, a person on average earnings is paying more pounds in tax—he is even paying a higher percentage in tax—because earnings have risen so fast. Those on three quarters of average earnings, average earnings or one and a half times average earnings have seen an increase in their real take home pay of over 20 per cent. It is absurd for Opposition Members to say that that amounts to an increase in taxation.

We might as well, if Opposition Members would like to do so, compare what a person on average earnings of

[Mr. Lamont]

£92·80 paid in 1979 in tax and national insurance contributions with what he would pay today. In 1979, he paid 27·8 per cent. in tax and national insurance contributions. Today he would pay 12·8 per cent. That is not a fair comparison for the Labour party to make. Obviously, £92 is not worth today what it was worth in 1979. The only fair way in which to compare the burden of income tax today with what it was in 1979 is to adjust the different levels of income—the different thresholds—in line with inflation and apply them to different multiples of earnings. If we adjust the regime that we inherited from the Labour party in 1979 for inflation and apply it to half average earnings, average earnings, twice average earnings and five times average earnings, at every level the burden of taxation today is lower than it was in 1979.

The hon. Member for Dagenham does not answer the point. He does not understand the point. The comparison that I have made is absurdly favourable to the Labour party. We are assuming that Labour Members would have adjusted their regime in line with inflation. That is precisely what they failed to do when they were in power. They did not adjust allowances in line with inflation. In real terms they went down, and the burden of taxation increased year by year. If a Labour Government were to come to power, the burden of taxation would increase massively for every family on average earnings, on above average earnings and below average earnings.

What matters to ordinary people is what happens to their real take-home pay after taking account of inflation. That calculation takes account of the VAT increases of which Opposition Members have made so much in debate. The record is clear. At every level of earnings real take-home pay has increased substantially under this Government. Under the last Government, living standards hardly rose for many people. For single people at all multiples of average earnings they actually fell under the Labour Government. For a man on average earnings with two children, real take-home pay has gone up by over 21 per cent. since 1978-79. For the same man, real take-home pay went up by less than 1 per cent. when the Labour party was in office—hardly any increase at all.

The overall impact of the Bill is to reduce taxes by £2·5 billion in 1987-88. As a result of the implementation of the Bill, we estimate that the percentage of earnings taken in income tax, national insurance contributions and indirect taxes will fall for virtually everyone except the very highest paid. The Budget is designed to reduce the burden of tax for the mass of our people. As a result of the income tax changes alone, a married man on average earnings will be £3·87 a week better off. A primary school teacher who is married to a nurse will be better off as a couple by £7·59 a week. People whose mortgage rates come down next month will gain a further benefit. A married man with no children and on average earnings with an average mortgage will be £5·37 a week better off as a result of the Budget changes and the fall in mortgage interest rates.

I agree with the Labour party if it is saying that the burden of taxation is too high and that we ought to get it down. I wish it had said that earlier. I wish that had been its attitude during the years in which we have been trying to control expenditure and cut taxes. We want to get taxes down. We believe that the tax burden is too high and we intend to continue to reduce it when it is prudent so to do. Tax reduction is the central element of the Government's policy. We believe that cutting taxes is the single most effective method available to us to encourage enterprise and improve the prospect for output and jobs.

A world-wide consensus exists on the need for tax reform, tax reductions and, in particular, the need to reduce income tax. We are committed to taking these reforms further forward in order to get the basic rate down to 25p. The Government remain committed to the reduction of the burden of taxation. We are the only party with such a commitment and we are the only party that has a track record of substantial tax reductions.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 171.

Division No. 146] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John

Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd

Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read a Second time.

FINANCE BILL (COMMITTAL)

Ordered,

That clauses Nos. 11, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 33, 45, 147 and 160 and Schedule 4 be committed to a Committee of the whole House;

That the remainder of the Bill be committed to a Standing Committee;

That, when the provisions of the Bill considered, respectively, by the Committee of the whole House and by the Standing Committee have been reported to the House, the Bill be proceeded with as if the Bill had been reported as a whole to the House from the Standing Committee. — *[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Health Services (Blackburn)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for choosing this debate this evening on the development of maternity and other health services in Blackburn. There is considerable need for investment in the Health Service in Blackburn. Waiting lists are too long. Typically, people may have to wait two years for a hip replacement. A case was brought to my notice the other day in my constituency advice bureau of a 13-month wait for an initial out-patient appointment for a medical condition. There is a problem with the renal unit at Accrington Victoria hospital.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) in his place. I am happy to allow him time at the conclusion of my speech to raise that matter, not least because he was good enough to allow me time in his Adjournment debate on the capital programme of Lancashire county council.

There are anxieties over the rundown of Calderstones and Brockhall hospitals and over the possible impact of the budgetary crisis in the Burnley district and the impact that that could have on emergency cover in Blackburn. I hope that the Minister will touch briefly on those issues in her reply.

Above all, there is an urgent need for investment in maternity services and for the building of a new maternity unit at Queen's Park hospital to be started as soon as humanly possible. The simple truth is that Blackburn women are getting a raw deal in maternity services.

I shall describe the facilities briefly. Maternity services in the Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley districts are provided at present on four sites: at Queen's Park hospital, the main consultative unit has 67 beds; Accrington Victoria hospital has a general practitioner unit with 15 beds; Bramley Meade GP unit has 20 beds; and Bull Hill, which is another GP unit, has 19 beds. There are six delivery suites at Queen's Park hospital and two at each of the other three peripheral units.

Ten years ago, the three peripheral GP units catered for about a third, or 32 per cent., of all deliveries in the district. However, that has now dropped to 13 per cent. Therefore, Queen's Park hospital, with only half the delivery suites in the district, caters for 87 per cent. of the live births. There has always been a great deal of pressure on the facilities at Queen's Park hospital, but that pressure has become much greater in recent years, partly because of the increasing load that I have just described.

The work load is one of the highest in the country. Of 196 district health authorities, 121 had fewer than 40 births per bed, 34 had between 40 and 45 births per bed and at Queen's Park hospital there were 48·8 births per bed. The throughput of patients discharged is also one of the highest and the pressure on the midwives is staggering. The regional average is 26·8 births per midwife, whereas at Queen's Park it is 80 per cent. above that figure at 45·4.

Above all, the pressure shows in the conditions which patients must endure. Medical, midwifery, nursing and ancillary staff at Queen's Park and in the peripheral units are excellent and I cannot praise them greatly enough—without their dedication the service would have broken

down many years ago—but the physical conditions are so poor that many women do not look back on their time there with pleasure, but regard it as a poor experience.

The ante-natal clinic is half the size needed for its load. On some mornings 100 patients wait to see doctors, but only four examination rooms are curtained off and there is one small waiting area, so some patients must wait in the corridors and some must stand. It is bad enough having to stand to wait for medical treatment when one is otherwise able-bodied, but for women in an advanced stage of pregnancy it is no joke. The number of ante-natal beds is inadequate and mothers must sometimes wait several hours for a bed to become vacant. Such is the pressure on beds that no mother stays after birth for more than 24 hours unless she or her baby is ill.

The special care unit is on the lower ground floor and away from the main area, only one lift serves the whole facility, sanitary accommodation is in a poor state and there is no anaesthetic or recovery room, no accommodation for parents and their babies and no facilities for privacy. The position is not only wholly unsatisfactory, but grossly wasteful and inefficient.

I know that the Minister will be aware of the campaigns to keep the GP units open at Bramley Meade, Bull Hill and Accrington Victoria hospital. Those three units are outside my constituency and I do not want to comment on the public pressure to keep them open, except to say that if adequate facilities existed at Queen's Park hospital the public demand for retaining Bull Hill and Bramley Meade as GP units would unquestionably evaporate. Different considerations apply in respect of Accrington Victoria hospital. If the facilities were adequate, GP beds at Queen's Park hospital could be made available for GPs and patients who wish them.

There is waste because, despite the fact that the peripheral units cater for only 13 per cent. of live births, they must be staffed 24 hours a day with one midwife and one nurse each. That is a reason why the work load on midwives at Queen's Park and the central units is so great. On 32 occasions in the past year, the flying squad, involving at least one doctor and one midwife and often involving two doctors and two nursing staff, has had to leave Queen's Park hospital to deal with emergencies at the periphery. Twenty-five per cent. of the patients admitted to the peripheral units must be transported in labour to Queen's Park hospital and that, too, is extremely unsatisfactory. I understand that in some respects the peripheral units are not now meeting the regional health authority's guidelines.

The diseconomies and waste also mean that the development of low-cost services—for example the use of domiciliary midwives to deliver babies—cannot be utilised because there is such pressure on the midwives at Queen's Park hospital. The ones at the peripheral units must be there for legal reasons to provide cover.

The need for the new building at Queen's Park hospital has been recognised by word, but not by deed. I have a fistful of letters containing almost bankable promises that the new building would be erected by various dates.

I have a letter from the then Minister for Health, the hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), which says:

> "This major scheme"—

for a new maternity unit—

> "is included in the RHA's capital programme for 1984/85."

I have a letter from the then chairman of the regional health authority, Sir Sidney Hamburger, which is dated 9 December 1981. It says:

> "The current timetable for pre-contract activities for this phase of development indicates that an approved budget cost estimate should be available early in 1983."

I have a letter dated 26 April 1983 from the chairman of the regional health authority, Sir John Page, which says:

> "The third phase will include a maternity department . . . and at the present time it is envisaged that the construction of this phase will commence in 1985/86."

Something went wrong with the planning at the RHA, because in June 1985 we were told, like a bolt from the blue, that phase 3, the maternity unit, was to be taken out of the capital programme altogether. After a fight and a major local campaign, it was reinstated, and I have another letter from the chairman of the district health authority, Mr. Ian Woolley, which says that the maternity unit will commence in 1990-91 and

> "will be available for use no later than 1993."

I understand from conversations that I had over the weekend that the starting date is 1992-93, so the planned date of final use could be some years later.

I must say, and say advisedly, that the conditions at Queen's Park maternity unit for the staff, and above all the women of the Blackburn district, are intolerable. They should not be tolerated, and in my judgment they cannot be tolerated for very much longer.

I say to the Minister that I hope that there is no suggestion that the Blackburn district will be penalised for its success in making do with the facilities which exist. The paediatric consultants and other staff have worked hard to reduce the perinatal mortality rate, which is now below the regional average. Some cynics have suggested that the price that the consultants and other staff will pay for that is to see this maternity unit disappear into the mists of time. I hope that that will not be the case.

I hope that the Minister will say that she accepts that the situation is intolerable and that she will use her good offices and great powers of persuasion to twist the arm of the regional health authority so that this important and major project is brought forward much earlier than currently planned.

10.27 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) for allowing me to briefly intervene in the debate.

The hon. Gentleman talked about misunderstanding and confusion, and I want to re-emphasise that. The threat to Accrington Victoria became apparent in 1978. It seemed to have been sorted out in 1985 when we were led to believe by the district health authority that we were to get a renal unit. Consequently, a ward closed at Accrington Victoria in July 1986. Staff were sent for training and suddenly in October 1986 it was announced that it had been postponed.

We now understand from Sir John Page—whom I went to see yesterday—that it was never intended that we would get a renal unit in the foreseeable future. He said that no date was fixed, yet the decision was taken to close the ward and send staff for training. Clearly, this considerable confusion has led to a dreadful lack of morale among the staff at Accrington Victoria, who do not know what to believe. The public and staff are entitled to an

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

explanation as to the truth. We need to know who made the decision. Were we entitled to a renal unit, and when will it come? The staff need to be reassured.

10.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I observe the usual courtesies and congratulate the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr Straw) on his success in the ballot.

The hon. Gentleman has generated a short but useful debate on maternity services in Blackburn. I should like to note the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and respond to him with particular regard to the renal services at Accrington Victoria. I understand that the regional health authority is committed to improving the facilities at Accrington Victoria with a new renal unit, but it has no firm date. I understand that it is considering the bid from the local health authority for funding for 1988-89.

I also understand that yesterday's meeting with the regional health authority chairman was not as satisfactory as one hopes that such meetings will be, but further discussions are always possible. My hon. Friend is aware that, whatever the morale of the staff, they should be congratulated on excellent treatment rates. Those for renal patients in that district are above the national average, which is clearly due to their hard work.

This debate gives me the opportunity to set the record straight on the proposed new maternity unit at Queen's Park and the related facilities at Bull Hill, and to put on record our investment in the health services of the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and the maternity services in particular. Before I do so, I will take up the point that he made about Burnley district health authority. It has sensibly done its sums and projected a £2 million overspend if it does not take some kind of remedial action. Constructive discussions on ways of remaining within the budget without affecting patient services are taking place between the regional health authority and Burnley. Therefore the overspend should have no effect on the constituents of the hon. Gentleman. We wait to see what the outcome of those discussions will be.

The district health authority that covers most of the hon. Gentleman's constituency is the Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley district health authority. Spending in 1982-83 in this health authority was around £45·5 million. The cash alloçation for the year just started is £59 million, which is a substantial increase. The district has improved from an estimation of around 10 per cent. below RAWP to an over-target figure, partly because of the technical element—it is managing a new hospital. There has been a substantial improvement in the health authority area by any appropriate standard of Health Service funding.

I note the points that the hon. Gentleman has made about the waiting lists. An extra £81,940 has been allocated this year for waiting lists, and should provide an extra 368 ear, nose and throat patient treatments and 33 additional hip replacements. We quote these statistics in the usual way, but that means 368 happier patients who are able to cope with ENT problems, and 33 people who are walking around not confined to wheelchairs. I am sure that they will be pleased to see that money.

A substantial amount of capital money is being spent in the district at the moment, all of which is coming on stream fairly shortly. About £4·5 million will be spent on the phase 1 redevelopment at Queen's Park hospital. It is due to be completed in July, and this will provide 56 acute beds and 40 children's beds, I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn has been concerned about children's facilities for his constituents; those facilities will be available in a matter of weeks, and will be a great improvement on what has gone before.

Queen's Park hospital phase 2, which is costing nearly £9 million, will be starting later this year, and will provide 76 geriatric beds, 50 geriatric day places, a new kitchen and a dining room. The advice of the local health authority has been that these facilities should take priority and should replace what was nowhere near up to standard. In addition, between 1982-83 and 1985-86, over £11·5 million has been spent on other projects managed by this district health authority. For example, some £100,000 was spent on structural repairs to Brockhall hospital.

One of the results of all this activity is that the number of in-patients treated in 1982-85 has gone up from 37,000 to 41,000—and we can add nearly 5,000 day cases to that. The number of out-patients is up to 175,000 in 1985, which is quite remarkable. The waiting list has dropped and waiting times have reduced, particularly some of the longer ones. However, as the hon. Gentleman sensibly said, they still have some way to go.

The hon. Member for Blackburn has accurately described what maternity services are available. Queen's Park hospital in Blackburn is the main district general hospital and provides the main maternity services—well over 3,200 deliveries a year, out of roughly 3,800. The number of births has been steady over the past five or six years. The GP unit that the hon. Gentleman has described at Bull hill in Darwen consists of 19 beds and the unit at Bramley Meade in Whalley has 20 beds. There are 15 beds at the Victoria hospital at Accrington and that hospital also provides a wide range of other acute services.

Mr. Straw: The Minister is correct to say that the number of births has remained fairly stable, but does she also accept that that figure is expected to rise from 3,850 in 1985 to 4,300 in 1993 and will only decline by 100 to 4,200 in 1996?

Mrs. Currie: I am aware that those predictions have been made. I was merely making the point that at this stage Queen's Park hospital covers by far the bulk of the births that take place in the neighbourhood.

The hon. Member for Blackburn will be aware that the maternity services advisory group, which has been in existence for some time and which has reported and advised the Department of Health and Social Security on how maternity services should be run said in 1984:

"Ideally GP maternity facilities should be integral or adjacent to consultant units."

That is not possible at the existing GP units that are isolated from the main hospitals. Therefore, for several years there has been a feeling — not a concern, as standards are high — that perhaps, when possible, the way to deliver babies is on a main general district hospital site.

The beds in the two isolated GP units are seriously under-used — I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware of that. There is about a 46 per cent. occupancy of the beds at Bull Hill and less than 40 per cent occupancy

at Bramley Meade. For example, in June and July 1986, a survey revealed that of the 57 mothers with a home address in Blackburn who had a baby in those two months only three went to Bull Hill. A number of them returned to Bull Hill for post-natal care. That raises the question of the quality of the community services that they might otherwise return to in their neighbourhoods. However, the figures reveal that by far the bulk of mothers go to Queen's.

Queen's Park hospital has about three times as many beds as the GP unit at Bull Hill but delivers 34 times the number of little patients. Even the GP unit at the Victoria hospital, Accrington, which is smaller with only 15 beds, is delivering three times as many babies. That information is based on the figures for 1985-86 and I understand that the figures have shifted even further since then.

Therefore, it makes sense to ask whether the appropriate funding is being given to the services that are presently provided. It is a wise and far-seeing district health authority that starts to consider that matter. The district health authority has said that the low usage and isolation of Bull Hill in particular makes the hospital expensive to run and calls into question its future. It forecasts that savings of around £68,000 net might be made and it would wish to use that money to improve community midwifery.

I accept the point the hon. Member for Blackburn made about ante-natal care. I take a dim view of large numbers of women being required to attend at hospital for ante-natal care all at the same time. Either that shows up some gap in the community service or it shows some gap in the management. In my judgment, those women could easily be asked to come at staggered times rather than the present system as described by the hon. Gentleman. I will undertake to draw that matter to the attention of the local management.

The community health council has said that it is concerned about some of the proposals, but the consultation process is still going on. If local agreement cannot be reached, Ministers are likely to be asked to take a decision. Therefore, my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn and the hon. Member for Blackburn will understand that I am in some difficulty in commenting on the merits or otherwise of the case. However, we will take into account all representations. In circumstances such as this it is much better for everyone concerned if local agreement can be reached that will benefit everyone. A consulation paper was issued in November and the DHA is now considering the proposals in the light of the representation made.

With regard to the proposed new maternity unit at Queen's Park hospital, I immediately reject the hon. Member for Blackburn's description of the existing facilities as "intolerable". The fact that a large number of healthy babies are born there, that a large number of GPs are happy to send their patients there and that the patients are willing to attend shows that the hon. Gentleman's description is a little over the top. The facilities are not as good as we would want them to be into the next century. That is why the regional health authority and the district health authority have more than once discussed improving and replacing them.

The possible new unit at Queen's Park hospital would be phase 3 of the district general hospital redevelopment. So far, no approval in principle has been applied for, so we have not been asked to go through any detailed proposals. But there are no proposals to drop the proposed new maternity unit from the capital programme. It has not been dropped from the capital programme at any stage. It did not appear in the draft programme, but was reinstated in the published programme last April.

In the past, North Western regional health authority's capital programme has been somewhat over-committed. All the regional health authorities used to do it on the basis of some scheme slippage. In other words, they would over-commit on the assumption that something would not get done on time. With better management, particularly since the Griffiths changes, that does not happen any more. What goes in the plan must happen on time and usually within budget—in fact, nearly always within budget.

However, the new programme is not over-committed. It therefore gives start dates that can and will be delivered. The new date for Queen's Park maternity unit—phase 3 of the development—is firm. I checked it again today. Building will start in 1992-93 and completion is expected in 1995. The region is considering the district health authority's request to bring forward the start date of phase 3 because of the anticipated increase in the number of births in the district. The hon. Gentleman provided details, but I understand that the district has yet to do so. When they come in, the regional health authority will consider exactly what is proposed.

The new maternity unit in the phase 3 development is budgeted to cost over £5 million, including some 84 maternity beds and 22 special care baby unit cots. When built, that unit will answer many of the queries and problems raised by the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn.

The current district provision is about 120 maternity beds, but the target will be slightly less than that in future —at least in part, because patterns of care are changing. When I was born, my mother was kept in hospital for a fortnight. When my younger daughter was born, I got out of hospital in 48 hours. Normal practice now is to keep the mother in hospital for as short a time as possible and to ensure that facilities at home are as they should be to enable mother and baby to return home satisfactorily.

I hope that I have answered most of the points that I am enabled to answer because of the consultation. I accept and I agree that the people of Blackburn and Hyndburn are entitled to the best possible service. I hope that I have shown that we are investing substantially in the Health Service in the neighbourhood to make sure that those people get the best service. No final decisions have been made either on the Bull Hill nursing home or on the exact pattern of future maternity provision, but we anticipate that there will be no delays in the proposed new maternity unit at Queen's Park hospital, apart from the dates that I mentioned.

We are building the health services not just for today but for our children and our grandchildren. The challenge is to meet the aspirations of all hon. Members' constituents with up-to-date services. I know that the local health authority at Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley, the regional health authority and, indeed, Ministers are all determined to achieve that objective. We look forward with interest to the results of the current consultation.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 23 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GEORGE DONALD EVANS AND DEBORAH JANE EVANS (MARRIAGE ENABLING) BILL *[Lords].*
Read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

JOHN ERNEST ROLFE AND FLORENCE IVEEN ROLFE (Marriage Enabling) Bill *[LORDS].*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Tuesday 28 April.

WHITCHURCH BRIDGE BILL

MASONIC TRUST FOR GIRLS AND BOYS BILL
As amended considered; to be read the Third time.

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAYS (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for second reading read.
To be read a second time upon Thursday 30 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hengistbury Head

1. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much grant-aid will be given for coastal protection work to Hengistbury Head.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): I am not yet in a position to quote precise figures, but, taking into account the grant previously approved on the first phase of the work, it seems likely that the total grant will be a little under £2·3 million when paid.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my hon. Friend accept the grateful thanks of my constituents and of Bournemouth borough council for this grant-aid to prevent further erosion of this important part of our coastal heritage, which is also a valuable tourist attraction? Does he agree that this kind of public expenditure has become available only as a result of the Government's prudent management of our economy? What percentage of the total cost of the coastal protection work does this grant-aid constitute?

Mr. Thompson: I agree that prudent management has made about £13 million available this year for such work. The figure that I quoted for the grant for the first phase of the works represents 63 per cent. I expect that later phases will increase that percentage.

Mr. Skinner: Would this be regarded as a specially-assisted general election area grant?

Mr. Thompson: I notice that the hon. Gentleman has not put in for a grant for his coastline. But if he could, he would. We are spending nearly £1 million in Newbiggin in Northumberland and we hope that that will help us in the election. We are spending £4 million in Blackpool and £2 million in Whitby, and we hope that that will help as well.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend will be aware that the eastern exposed part of Hengistbury Head is in my constituency. Is he aware that the tidal flow around the head has long been presumed to be one of the main causes of the continuing loss of sand on Friars Cliff beach? Will he ensure that when money becomes available—as he has announced today—research into that aspect, which bothers many of my constituents, will be funded out of that or alternative sources?

Mr. Thompson: I am sure that my hon. Friend will have many opportunities over the years to repeat that question, and we will consider it carefully then.

Tenant Farmers

2. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of tenant farmers; and what subjects were discussed.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): I meet tenant farmers and their representatives regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. Ashdown: When will the Minister reply to my urgent letter of six weeks ago posing questions to him about grass keep and the transfer of tenancy between father and son? Does he accept that his suggestions about planning guidelines, taken with the threat to country structure plans and the reduction of protection for agricultural lands, could leave tenants facing incontestable eviction orders, without adequate compensation?

Mr. Jopling: I have a copy of the hon. Gentleman's letter. It is a long, three-page letter, to which we are trying to give him a detailed reply.

The proposed changes in planning procedures would not put tenants in a worse position than they are in now in terms of protection or compensation. All proposals for the development of agricultural land will still require planning permission. Local authorities will have to look at each case on its merits in the light of general Government guidance. Moreover, if a landlord is granted planning permission, a tenant can receive additional compensation—a sum equal to four years' rent—over and above the basic compensation. Compensation is also available for improvements and other tenant rights.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my right hon. Friend last met the tenant farmers, did they congratulate him on the Government's policy which allowed farm rents to be charged on the earning capacity of the land?

Mr. Jopling: As far as I can remember, that particular point did not come up, but I am pleased to say that the Agricultural Holdings Act 1984 has had the effect of encouraging rather more tenancies. Certainly the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers' surveys in 1985 and 1986 have suggested that there has been an increase in fresh lettings in the private sector since Parliament passed that Act.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister not at all concerned about the fact that there are now 5 per cent. fewer tenanted farms than there were when the Government took office, partly because of the predictable failure of the legislation to which he has just referred, but also because of the deplorable conduct of Tory-controlled local authorities, and, indeed, the Scottish Office, which have been disposing of let smallholdings? Will he acknowledge that the Labour party's proposals for a land bank to make land available to let to tenant farmers is the only way in which more tenants will be able to come into the industry?

Mr. Jopling: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will long have the opportunity to sit on the Opposition Benches spending money, of which, mercifully, he will never have control, on various wildcat schemes that he might think are a good idea for the time. In the months that lie ahead the Labour party's agricultural policy will get just about as much support as it has always had.

Farm Incomes

4. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how average farm incomes in the United Kingdom for the latest available period compare with those for the other nine member states of the European Community.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Commission figures show that in 1984-85, the most recent year for which figures are available, farm family income in the United Kingdom was broadly twice the Community average. The United Kingdom was fourth highest in the Community, ahead of both France and Germany.

Mr. Howells: I am grateful to the Minister for his reply, but is he aware that between 1980 and 1986 the net incomes of farmers in Wales dropped by 34 per cent., while the net incomes of farmers in the United Kingdom dropped by 21 per cent.? Does the blame for that lie with the Secretary of State for Wales, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Government, or the EEC?

Mr. Gummer: It is still true that the average incomes of everyone working in agriculture have risen more in Britain over the past three years than in France, Italy or Germany. That must be because of the excellent arguments of this Government, who fight for British farmers within the EC harder than any other Ministry.

Mr. Duffy: Does the Minister agree with Mr. Robin Leigh-Pemberton—as he well knows, a farmer as well as the Governor of the Bank of England — who, in a reported statement last week following an address to an audience of farmers, said that in his view the outlook for farmers' incomes will get worse rather than better?

Mr. Gummer: Farmers have a real future within the Community if they are efficient and sell their goods effectively, and if the Government continue in office, fighting for British farmers within the EC.

Mr. Leigh: What would be the effect on net farm incomes if the scheme proposed by the leader of the Social Democratic party were put into operation — a scheme which the president of the National Farmers Union has described as a disaster, or a potential disaster?

Mr. Gummer: The effect would be to increase the incomes of other countries' farmers relative to those in the United Kingdom and to depress most significantly the income off our largest producerss of grain, as well as the income of the producer of other products. The fact of the matter is that my hon. Friend is a little out of date. There have already been three agricultural policies from the alliance since that one, each worse than the previous one.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware of the danger of quoting averages and of the fact that in Wales about one third of small farmers are on family income supplement? In view of that, will he state the Government's attitude towards the European Community's plan to top up farmers' incomes? Will he give an assurance that, if the scheme goes ahead, we shall not miss out in competition with France or Germany?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Averages are not always helpful, but if we are to compare countries, it is difficult to find another way to do so. The problem that he put forward is that, because the average size of farms in the rest of the Community is between a quarter and a fifth of what it is in this country, if we go ahead with the kind of scheme that is proposed it is likely that precisely what he wants will not be obtained. In other words, the majority of the money will go to other countries' farmers and not to those in this country. The Government have been seeking to ensure that, in all decisions within the Community, British farmers are dealt with fairly. That is our job and that is what we are working towards.

Alternative Farm Enterprises

5. **Mr. Pike** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of the output of alternative farm enterprises from commercial holdings in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The phrase "alternative farm enterprises" covers a wide range of farm-based activities. I am afraid that no single figure for output is available.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that the recent figures announced in his programme of £25 million subsidy is pathetically small in comparison with the £2·5 billion subsidy to agriculture in general? How will the ALURE proposals affect this policy and arise when the figures are so small and he is not able to respond to the question that I originally asked?

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Gentleman's original question was suitably vague, and therefore he got a suitably vague answer. The £25 million is to be added to

the whole range of grants that are available in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and other less-favoured areas, which are sometimes as high as 30 per cent.—often 15 per cent.—and for environmentally beneficial works, 60 per cent. The less-favoured area grants are well appreciated and well understood by farmers. If we add the amount that the hon. Gentleman put to the grants already available, it comes to a substantial sum.

Mr. Marland: Does my hon. Friend agree that whatever may be the potential income from alternative farming enterprises, the main income for farmers will still be derived from producing traditional crops and other foodstuffs that are produced on the farm? Does he not think that it might be appropriate at this moment to pay tribute to those who have done a marvellous job in marketing our cereal surplus during the past year, because they have halved to just under 2 million tonnes the amount of surplus cereals that we are carrying forward to next year?

Mr. Thompson: It is a remarkable piece of marketing that I hope will be taken up by other parts of the industry. Marketing is most important. I agree with my hon. Friend that the main range of crops will, and must, be the basis of British farming for years to come.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister tell us how many jobs he expects to be created as a result of the £25 million investment in alternative enteprises that was announced by his right hon. Friend last month? Will he confirm that the £25 million is new money and that he is not simply talking about money that has already been earmarked for investment in the countryside?

Mr. Thompson: It is new money, and it is a good initiative that saves jobs before they are lost. That is the sort of thing for which the hon. Gentleman has been looking for a long time.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Does my hon. Friend agree that despite the fact that many people claim that agriculture is being subsidised to the tune of £2·5 billion, according to our right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), the net cost to the Treasury of agricultural support is only £246 million? Will he explain this inconsistency?

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friend has obviously read the White Paper and is still reading it. In fact, he has not got to the part that gives him the answer to the question about which he is coming to see me next week.

Sheepmeat

6. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ensure the future of the European sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Gummer: The regime brings considerable benefits to British producers and consumers and is an important factor underlying our strong sheepmeat sector. I shall continue to resist firmly any changes that would discriminate against United Kingdom interests, including the introduction of two-tier pricing.

Mr. Livsey: Can the Minister tell us what progress he hopes to make in the coming summer's review of the European sheepmeat regime, and can he give us some indication of the proposals that he will put to the Commission to secure the position of British sheep producers, particularly in the less-favoured areas?

Mr. Gummer: The present regime has great advantages and we intend to defend those. It is the Commission that is doing this review, and no doubt we shall seek to put forward our views. The one thing that we must ensure is that there is no discrimination against the United Kingdom. That is why I again raised the question of two-tier pricing, because that is the way to ensure discrimination. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will dissociate himself from his own party's policy on this matter.

Mr. Cormack: May I express the hope that in fighting for British farmers the others come off worse than my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Gummer: I shall take that as a compliment and a hope for improvement.

Mr. John: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, two-tier pricing is not the only discrimination. The current proposal by the Commission in the price negotiations is to limit the grant to flock sizes, which would be heavily discriminatory against the United Kingdom. Will he ensure that that does not get through?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is quite right and is at one with us in fighting against that. I draw to his attention the fact that that is one of the things we find so unacceptable in the policies put forward by the alliance parties, which constantly suggest that we can have a policy in the Community that gives special help to small farmers while ignoring the fact that small farms in the Community are very much smaller than small farms in Britain. It is no good suggesting that we can have a Community policy that excludes all those small farms but gives special help to British small farms. One can say that only if one's remarks are directed at the electorate and not at the Community as a whole.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister address the real concerns of those who are raising sheep in the hills and uplands, namely that measures to constrain production of cereals on lowland ground will lead to the expansion and proliferation of sheep flocks in these areas, to the detriment of the store breeders in the hills and uplands?

Mr. Gummer: That is why, in the proposals by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the suggestions for set aside will not allow payment to be made for those who move into grass and use that grass in competition with those on the hillsides. When any of the hon. Gentleman's constituents raise these concerns, he is able to defend the policies of the Government in protecting their interests. I hope that he will also tell his constituents the truth about his policy, which would harm them very considerably.

Milk Quotas

7. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to have discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about the operation of milk quotas.

Mr. Jopling: The next meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers will start on 27 April, but the operation of milk quotas is not on the agenda for that day.

Mr. Knox: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the deep resentment felt by many British dairy farmers over the fact that New Zealand imports are included in the British national quota? Does he think that this is fair, particularly when one third of the butter consumed in this country comes from New Zealand?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend will remember that when we joined the Community, part of the negotiation was that part of our butter market should be available to New Zealand. My hon. Friend will also recall that the importation of New Zealand butter has halved since we joined the Community, and each year imports are on a descending scale. This matter will come up for review again next year, and no doubt the comments of my hon. Friend will be heard and noted by the Commission at that time.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that, since New Zealand has reneged on her defence commitments, she has no further claim to part of our market for agricultural produce?

Mr. Jopling: I hear what my hon. Friend had to say. I think he knows, as I do, that many farmers in Britain have expressed similar views. However, it is not a matter for immediate negotiation. It will come up again next year.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that when I recently attended my regular meeting with the Cumnock branch of the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the right hon. Gentleman was about as unpopular there as at the annual meeting of the National Farmers Union of England? One of the questions asked by my constituents in the farming industry related to reductions in milk quotas. Can the Minister say what compensation will be given to farmers who are compulsorily required to reduce their milk quotas? Will it be in any way similar to that given to those taking part in the outgoers scheme?

Mr. Jopling: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first comment, I can only say that these are not happy times to be a Minister of Agriculture anywhere in Europe. At least I have not been burnt in effigy, as my German colleague has been on a number of occasions—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must resist these temptations.

Mr. Jopling: Compensation for reductions in milk quotas is to be made at the same rate as in the previous outgoers scheme—27·5p per litre will be paid over seven years. The temporary suspension of quota will be compensated at 6·5p a litre. Bearing in mind that the average profit on a litre of milk is between 3p and 4p, the hon. Gentleman will surely agree that the second of those levels is generous.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. Friend has presented the House with a great temptation this afternoon, but will he reconsider the very relevant question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox)? Is it fair, when my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the Front Bench make great play of the contribution to dairy surpluses made by the United Kingdom dairy industry, that we should have to accept about 76,000 tonnes of New Zealand butter, when that is the reason for our contribution to the surplus? Will my right hon. Friend say now that he thinks it wrong that United Kingdom dairy farmers' income and future should be placed in jeopardy because we in the United Kingdom take sole responsibility for New Zealand butter in the EEC?

Mr. Jopling: Yes, but many hon. Members at the time of our accession to the EEC were insistent that adequate steps be taken to preserve the position and to look after New Zealand. If my hon. Friend would be good enough to look at the figures, he would see that the amount of butter that is manufactured in this country and put into intervention is larger than the amount that is imported from New Zealand.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Minister accept that, even after the recent rise in the outgoers scheme price, it is almost certain — as market prices are running ahead of the 27·5p a litre that he mentioned — that that will be the flop that its predecessor was? Will he reconsider the position or does he think it just and fair that those awarded hardship quota by the tribunals are still receiving only 50 per cent. of that quota?

Mr. Jopling: The reason why hardship cases last year were not able to receive their full quota was the lack of milk available to be allocated to them. We could have allocated 100 per cent. to the hardship cases, but that would have meant finding the milk from the others who had set quotas. Unfortunately, we cannot produce spare quota from thin air.

Mr. Charles Wardle: When my right hon. Friend read the recent Court of Auditors report, did he notice that the cost of cold storage for butter stocks alone exceeded the entire revenue that was raised by the milk co-responsibility levy? Does that not show what nonsense has been made of CAP economics, and does it not point to the need for further sensible reform that is fair to the United Kingdom dairy sector?

Mr. Jopling: Yes. My hon. Friend will know that I have been making that point for a very long time. He will agree that the ultimate nonsense is that half the total costs of running the European Community relate to the storage and disposal of surplus foodstuffs.

Beef

8. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the beef sector of the agriculture industry.

Mr. Jopling: I meet the president of the National Farmers Union frequently. On 1 April we discussed a number of matters, including the state of the beef sector.

Mr. Shepherd: When my right hon. Friend next meets the president of the National Farmers Union, will he discuss with him the very real anxieties of the hard-pressed beef producers in this country, and in particular the anxiety about the effect on the market of the cow cull that will result from the implementation of the outgoers scheme? Is he aware that there is some confusion about the existence of some 430 million ecu, apparently to help to stabilise the market, and will he be so kind as to explain this to the House?

Mr. Jopling: Yes, I am glad to explain to my hon. Friend that the Commission recognises that measures taken in the milk sector will have an impact on beef

producers. It estimated that the cost of the dairy package that would fall on the beef budget would be 435 million ecu in 1987 and 1988. That figure, which was confirmed by the Commission on 27 March, is an estimate of the extra expenditure on aid for private storage and export refunds that could arise as a result of the extra cow beef coming on to the market.

Republic of Ireland (Beef)

11. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the level of import of beef from the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Gummer: Imports of beef from the Irish Republic totalled 122,000 tonnes in 1986. The green rate change secured in December has reduced the UK MCA and eliminated the advantage which Irish exporters gained last summer. Imports in the first two months of 1987 were 15,656 tonnes.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the only reason why imports of Irish beef in recent months have fallen below the 10,000 tonnes a month that were being imported at the end of 1986 is that the Irish seem temporarily to have run out of cattle to send here? Is there not a very serious threat of a new surge of imports following the clampdown on intervention buying in the Republic of Ireland earlier this month, and will he take urgent action, either through a further adjustment of the green pound or through any other mechanism that is available to him, to protect the interests of British producers against unfair competition from Ireland?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must, I think, accept that that is not the only reason. Part of the reason is the effect of the change in the green pound that we have already secured, but he is perfectly right in saying that the green pound differential adds to the difficulties and provides opportunities for the Irish in our market. It is a traditional market for the Irish, and the hon. Gentleman is quite right that many British farmers very rightly feel aggrieved that they are being undercut in their own market. However, I would remind him that this is partly also one of the inevitable effects of the beef variable premium arrangements, which were put into operation by his own right hon. Friend. Those arrangements mean that the beef variable premium is payable on Irish products that are sold in this country. In order to put that right, a series of measures will have to be taken. In our negotiations we are very conscious of the needs of the beef industry and of the way that it is affected by our near neighbour, the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. McQuarrie: My right hon. Friend must be aware that in 1986 beef imports to the United Kingdom from Ireland were 48 per cent. above those of the previous year, and the 6 per cent. reduction in the green pound was certainly not adequate for United Kingdom beef producers. Will he therefore ensure in the negotiations that whatever reduction there may be in the green pound, it will not disadvantage United Kingdom beef producers? They cannot cope with a reduction in the green pound if the same kind of reduction is given to the Irish. The Irish should not be allowed unfairly to compete against United Kingdom producers.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend ought to remember that during the negotiations, and finally almost the fisticuffs, to ensure that the green pound devaluation for beef in this country was equal to that in the Republic of Ireland, we made the point that he has made, namely, that changes in the green pound for Ireland inevitably demand a similar change in the green pound for the United Kingdom if there is not to be a further distortion in relations between the two countries.

Price Fixing

12. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress with the price fixing negotiations in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Jopling: At the meeting of the Agriculture Council on 30-31 March Ministers set out their initial reaction to the Commission's price and agrimonetary proposals. I expect negotiations to start again at the meeting of the Council next week on 27-28 April.

Mr. Maclennan: What was the Minister's initial reaction to the ludicrous proposal from the Commission on the devaluation of the green pound?

Mr. Jopling: I have told the Commissioner that we are looking very carefully at that situation. If the hon. Gentleman is a little patient he will find that I have some more to say about that at the beginning of the debate this afternoon, provided that I catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my right hon. Friend next meets the Commission to discuss the price review, will he reassure the House that he will not accept proposals for a fats and oils tax?

Mr. Jopling: Again, I say to my hon. Friend that I shall be saying more about that later this afternoon. Our opposition to that proposal is exactly the same as it has been in the past. We are wholly opposed to it.

Mr. Mark Hughes: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that his opposition to such a tax will receive total support from all sections of the House? This is not a partisan issue in the House. The whole of the British people are opposed to any such tax on oils and fats.

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful for the support of the hon. Gentleman. No doubt he was as pleased as I was to note that the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament yesterday voted decisively against that tax. That fortifies me very much for the discussions next week.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Will my right hon. Friend also bear in mind that cutting prices will not solve surplus production, that in the past eight years the price of cereals has fallen by about 33 per cent., and that during that same period production has doubled?

Mr. Jopling: On many occasions I have told my hon. Friend that I am aware that cutting prices alone will not deal with the cereals surplus. That is why I proposed last year to the Council of Ministers — when it met in the United Kingdom — that we should go for a land diversion scheme for cereals. I am glad about the decision that was taken a few weeks ago in Brussels in agreeing the socio-structural package and that we now have a door that is wider open to a scheme of the sort that I have been

proposing to deal with the cereals sector. I hope that that will be further encouraged in the course of the weeks and months ahead.

Food Aid

13. **Mr. George Howarth** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest information as to the costs incurred by charities in the operation of the European Economic Community food aid scheme.

Mr. Gummer: Community funds cover the costs for charities of packaging free food and transporting it to their own distribution points; and claims for a total of £1·8 million have so far been received by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce. Onward distribution costs were for the charities themselves.

Mr. Howarth: Does the Minister accept that if any such scheme is discussed in future with the Commission, strong representations should be made to it so that charities can be properly compensated for their loss of time, use of premises and expenses under such a scheme?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should learn lessons from the scheme. I hope he will not say that it was a complete loss. Most of the charities to whose representatives I have spoken have welcomed the opportunities that the scheme gave them. It has enabled them to reach people in certain areas whom they would not otherwise have reached. If the subject is raised again, perhaps the way to tackle it would be to make the scheme more efficient, but I do not know whether it will be raised.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that last month the Public Accounts Committee was told that 9,000 tonnes of butter had been given away under the scheme, but that stocks in this country remained at 237,000 tonnes? If he uses the scheme again to give some of those massive quantities away, will he ensure that the details are more accurately thought out first?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend must accept that it was never seen as a means of getting rid of surpluses. It was seen as a means of helping people who had been particularly hard hit by the bad weather. However detailed the organisation may have been, if we had held it up we would probably have got rid of less in this country, given the timing that was arranged. In the end, people can use only a certain amount of butter. We have given away 54 million packets of butter and over 8 million portions of beef. Some of us ought to say how good that is and support the charities for the work that they have done.

Mr. Randall: Should not the Government accept their responsibilities and properly cover the cost of the distribution of the food, rather than sponge off charities such as the Salvation Army and War on Want in such a disgraceful way?

Mr. Gummer: To my knowledge War on Want has not been involved in this. The Salvation Army and the other charities that have been involved have all accepted the terms on which it was run with great enthusiasm. I am sorry to say to the hon. Gentleman, who I know does not mean his comments in this way, that the only people who are making the sort of comment that he is making are the politically motivated Members on the Opposition Benches.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people in the country believe that this scheme was a very good one and that it provided an advantage for the charities involved to do good work, which is what they are there to do? In future, will he see that the scheme is extended rather than diminished?

Mr. Gummer: I agree with my hon. Friend that it has provided great opportunities and I very much commend the sort of comments that have been made by people such as the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and the heads of the Salvation Army and other charities about their pleasure at being able to take part in such an important scheme. Of course we must still learn from it. We are not complacent about it, but the nasty party political back-biting that we have heard from the Labour party is something that we should eschew.

Dairy Quotas and Beef Subsidies

14. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further representations he has received concerning the current changes to dairy quotas and beef subsidies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I frequently receive representations on these matters from farmers and industry representatives.

Mrs. Clwyd: If more dairy cows are to be culled as a result of quota restrictions, can the Minister tell us what the effect will be on the price of beef in the short-term and the longer term?

Mr. Gummer: I think the hon. Lady would probably agree that in the longer term—18 months or so—the likelihood is that the beef market will firm up considerably because of the smaller dairy herd and the need to bring more forward from specialist beef producers. In the meantime, there is a wide range of views, some of them from independent sources, suggesting that it will not have a major effect. We are certainly going to spend a good deal of money trying to take beef off the market into third markets to try to help. If the hon. Lady will cast her mind back to the original imposition of quotas, the truth was that the effect upon the beef market was very much less than had been feared. The hon. Lady must watch carefully, but my own view is that things will not be as bad as some fear and that in the medium term there is a good future for the beef industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Will my right hon. Friend ensure the continuation of the milk quota leasing system, which worked well last year and brought a welcome degree of flexibility to the system? Can he explain why it has been stopped, and say whether he will reinstitute it as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Gummer: We are doing everything possible to defend the flexibility in the system which the milk quota leasing opportunities give. We are the country most concerned with that flexibility. We are opposed by other countries in the Community and I am afraid that the Commission has not always found it possible to support us, although it does look as if it is being a little more supportive now. I hope very much that we will be able to continue that for as long as we have quotas, because flexibility is the name of the game if we are to ensure that the milk industry is open to others and is not just closed on those who are in it at the moment.

Mr. John: May I revert to the figure of 435 million ecus mentioned by the Minister as being the effect of cow culls on the beef industry? Will he now confirm that that is nowhere in the EEC budgets for the coming year, despite the Commission's obvious sympathy, which was mentioned by the Minister?

Mr. Gummer: I have to say that exactly what my right hon. Friend the Minister and I have said in the House has been confirmed by the Commission. There is no doubt about it. The money is there for that purpose. It is there clearly in the budgets and was taken into account when the budgets were drawn up. It is there in the additions. If the hon. Gentleman would like to do the addition he will find that there is an extra sum for that purpose.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Will the Minister tell the House why he supports the Irish beef producers so that they can make a profit while beef producers in the United Kingdom make a loss?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bruit abroad that I was attacked violently in the Irish Dail for my opposition to the Irish subsidy—*[Interruption.]* My current state is not entirely the result of that. I do not think that anybody could accuse me of being other than extremely strongly opposed to any special treatment for the Irish. The Irish have been treated in a way that is not acceptable, particularly in the original allocation of dairy quotas. I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Minister had a major success in ensuring that on this occasion the Irish got the same treatment as everyone else.

PRIME MINISTER

Cereal Production (Balance of Payments)

Q1. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Prime Minister by how much the balance of payments in relation to cereal production has grown since 1979; and if she will list those industries, services or sectors where the balance of payments has grown by an equivalent or greater sum.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): In 1979 the cereal sector had a deficit on its crude trade balance of nearly £500 million; for the 12 months to September 1986 it returned a surplus of nearly £100 million. Similar improvements have occurred in some other sectors, including organic chemicals, aerospace equipment, insurance, banking and other financial services, oil and natural gas extraction.

Mr. Howell: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does she agree that her reply is, in itself, a tribute to the efficiency and enterprise of agriculture and of the cereals sector in particular?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend that farmers have made an outstanding contribution to the economy. They and we know that some things, including cereals, are now in surplus. We have to try to deal with those surpluses because they are taking far too much of the total European budget. We shall try to do so at a rate with which the farmers can cope.

Mr. Fatchett: What does the Prime Minister intend to do for those sectors that have not done quite as well as the cereal sector—for example, electrical machinery, textiles and vehicles? In those sectors, a combined surplus of £1,400 million has turned into a combined deficit of £6,400 million under this Government. What will she do for those important industries?

The Prime Minister: Textiles, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, have made a tremendous comeback and monthly improvements are being made, both in the amount produced and in the excellent textile designs for clothing and furnishings. It sounds to me as though the hon. Gentleman is proposing a good deal of protectionism, which, of course, we reject. We have a multi-fibre arrangement. I remind the hon. Gentleman that Opposition Members frequently ask for more aid for Third world countries while denying them trade.

Mr. Leigh: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it would be a disaster for cereal farmers if their agricultural buildings were rated, as the Labour party wants, or if their products suffered a two-tier price structure, which is what the alliance wants? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Conservative party is implacably opposed to the rating of agricultural properties and to a two-tier price structure?

The Prime Minister: Yes. We are totally opposed to the rating of agricultural property, which would not only have a disastrous effect on farming but would put up prices for the consumer.

Mr. Mark Hughes: Does the Prime Minister accept that, had the coal or textile industries received the same degree of protection that has been afforded to the cereal producers of Europe, their performance might have been rather better?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the textile industry has a multi-fibre arrangement, through the European Community, which is renewed each time that it runs out. The hon. Gentleman is aware of the difficulties of negotiations that we have with it. He is also aware of the massive subsidies that continue to go to the coal industry each year.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. MacKay: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend find time to consider supporting the Leader of the Opposition in his plea to teachers to desist from strike action, not for the selfish reason of trying to preserve the Labour vote in the election, but for the much more genuine reason that it will do grave damage to pupils and will affect the reputation of their profession?

The Prime Minister: I believe that parents have no sympathy whatsoever with teachers who disrupt their children's education and deliberately set out to damage their children's educational prospects. Most of us want teachers to be regarded with high prestige and as a profession. Professional people do not set out to damage the education of children in their care.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Has the Prime Minister yet ascertained what message was intended to be conveyed to her by the recent spate of letter bombs?

The Prime Minister: I am not quite certain what the right hon. Gentleman intends, but I personally find his question rather offensive.

Sir Anthony Grant: Following the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), will my right hon. Friend send a message of encouragement to those teachers in my consitituency and elsewhere who are not taking industrial action? Is not the latest attitude of the appropriately named NUT a classic case of being willing to wound but afraid to strike?

The Prime Minister: I firmly believe, with my hon. Friend, that most teachers do not go on strike and will not go on strike. They appreciate the enormous increase in pay and the new salaries structure that has been granted to them. They wish to get on with the job of giving a good education to children. Those teachers deserve all our support and recognition.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the various studies that have been undertaken under the Government's auspices into systems of welfare benefit payment, will the Prime Minister tell us whether she is opposed to any scheme that would make payment of full benefit to the unemployed or the families of the unemployed conditional upon their undertaking compulsory work or training?

The Prime Minister: We have no proposals for compulsory work or training. There are countries that have what is known as a workfare scheme. Such schemes vary enormously from state to state in the United States. At the moment we have the community programme in which people can engage, and we hope that they will engage in it. At the moment we have no proposals for compulsory work as a condition of receiving benefit. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have already put through the House legislation that shows the general structure of our future welfare benefits.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware of the widespread concern there will be at the use of her phrase "at the moment"? I address the question to her again: is she in favour of forced labour, required as a condition of unemployment benefit, or is she not in favour of such forced labour? That is a very direct question. There must be a very direct answer.

The Prime Minister: May I put to the right hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I am trying to answer in a reasonable and reasoned way. The Opposition are not used to that. I put this point to the right hon. Gentleman: young people from 16 to 18 can stay on at school, can stay on in further education, can undertake a youth training scheme—they have a guarantee that they can do that—or they can do a job. I think that we shall very soon be putting to the electorate whether young people who neither stay on at school, nor stay on in education, nor take training, nor take a job, are entitled to receive supplementary benefit.

Mr. Kinnock: Can the Prime Minister explain to the House and to the country why, if youngsters are rich and indolent, tax concessions must be offered to get them to work, but if youngsters are poor and despondent, they are punished and have to take compulsory schemes?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. These young people about whom we are talking have the chance of education, training and education through technical colleges, a youth training scheme for which they receive an allowance, or in many cases a job. They may choose to refuse all four, but it is not the Government to whom they then look to pay them. Any benefit they get then is found by working people, and many of us think that they are not entitled to call upon their neighbours to keep them under those circumstances.

Mr. Michael Morris: Did my right hon. Friend hear or see the news last evening when one of the teachers' union leaders said that they hoped that pupils taking examinations would not be affected? Is this position not totally unacceptable? Will she ensure through the Secretary of State for Education that any teacher who withdraws his labour from pupils taking examinations will be dismissed, and furthermore that the union that encourages that will be prosecuted?

The Prime Minister: Teachers, if they wish children to do their level best in examinations, will not disrupt the education of those children, but will do everything to stay at their posts and help children study and pass their examinations. As far as dismissals are concerned, teachers are employed, not by Government, but by local educational authorities, and that is a matter for their decision.

Q3. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruce: Is the Prime Minister aware of the great sense of injustice among Scottish universities in general, and Aberdeen and Dundee universities in particular, at the latest round of cuts in funding? Does she not accept that it is almost impossible for universities to get on with the job of attracting research and teaching students when they are faced with cuts that threaten their very viability?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, total funding to universities this year through the Universities Grants Committee was increased by 10 per cent. How that is distributed is a matter for the University Grants Committee, on criteria that it publishes. Some of it goes according to the excellence of research institutions in unversities. The total amount is increased. Distribution is a matter for that committee.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a number of teachers in my constituency have written to me enclosing their ballot papers for the NUT-NAS ballot, complaining bitterly that the ballot is not secret and that they have to return these forms, with their name and the address of their school open, to their union representative? In these circumstances, they feel that pressure is being quite unfairly brought upon them.

The Prime Minister: I am very glad that my hon. Friend has brought up that point. I agree with her that undue pressure is being put upon them. It is not surprising that many teachers are leaving both the NUT and the NAS-UWT, when these matters are occurring.

Dr. Owen: As there has been great difficulty in retaining both nurses and midwives, and in some parts of the country great difficulty in recruitment, will the Prime Minister accept that it would not be acceptable, for the third year running, not to implement the independent pay review body awards in full, and that it should not be

staged? It is of particular importance, if we are to persuade teachers to go for an independent pay review procedure, that they should have confidence in the capacity of the Government to accept independent pay review awards.

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman must be aware, a written question is being answered this afternoon, within about half an hour, on the results of the Government's consideration of the review body reports. I am rather surprised therefore that he chose to ask that question.

Q4. **Mr. Martin Flannery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Prime Minister agree with me —[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must make his question relevant to the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Mr. Flannery: They all want to know about the teachers over there, so I am going to tell them. I repeat the question. Will the Prime Minister agree with me that one of the fundamental principles that divides democracy from dictatorship is the right of working people freely to negotiate with their employers without any pressure from the Government such as to destroy their negotiating power? Now that the right hon. Lady and the most hated Secretary of State for Education and Science that there has ever been—*[Interruption.]*—have totally disrupted our children's education, and intend to continue doing so, will she have a good talk to him? The Prime Minister has only to order the right hon. Gentleman to reinstitute negotiating rights for teachers for all children to be back at school being educated properly.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the Burnham committee had not been working for quite some time. It did not work through the most recent negotiations and the teachers' unions could not agree on what they would have. It was because the committee did not work that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science had to take the action that he took. He has given teachers the best pay deal that they have ever had in history, including a good teaching structure, and many teachers are grateful for it——

Mr. Flannery: It is not to do with money, it is negotiations.

The Prime Minister: It is something to do with money if they do not get it or if they have not got it. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the present negotiating position is temporary. There are many who say that they want a new negotiating position, and so do we. It is difficult, however, to get them to agree on what would be appropriate in the circumstances. We shall use the coming years to secure a new negotiating arrangement, which we want just as much as does the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman referred to matters that had taken place this week. I do not think that the teaching profession has enhanced its status by the performance this week that was seen on television.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 27 APRIL—Until about Seven o'clock, Second Reading of the Consumer Protection Bill *[Lords]*.

Afterwards Second Reading of the Paliamentary and Other Pensions Bill.

Motion on the Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order.

TUESDAY 28 APRIL—Opposition Day (12th Allotted Day). Until about Seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Housing: A Major Cause for Concern". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "The Proposed Privatisation of Rolls-Royce". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the Stansted Airport Aircraft Movement Limit Order.

WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL — THURSDAY 30 APRIL — Consideration in Committee on the Finance Bill.

At the end on Wednesday, motions on value added tax orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 1 MAY—Private Member's Bills.

[Debate on Wednesday 29 April:

The Value Added Tax (International Services) Order 1987

The Value Added Tax (Betting, Gaming and Lotteries) Order 1987]

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I understand that the pay review body's recommendations on nurses' pay and the Government's reaction to them are to be made public this afternoon without an oral statement being made to the House. Together with many other right hon. and hon. Members, I condemn the evasive way in which the Government are announcing an important decision without giving the House an opportunity to cross-question the Secretary of State for Social Services. I hope that the Government will honour the recommendations of this year's review in full, pay the increase in full, date it from 1 April and not evade, dodge or give short change to nurses, as they have done for the past two years.

Has the Leader of the House read the statement which was made yesterday to the Select Committee on Transport by Mr. James Sherwood, to whom the Government sold off Sealink for a scandalously low price, to the effect that the shipping industry has been written off by the Government? In the light of all-party early-day motion 515, which has been signed by 234 right hon. and hon. Members, will the right hon. Gentleman give consideration to a debate in Government time on the merchant fleet so that the Government's deplorable indifference towards this vital part of our economic and defence capability can once again be considered by the House.

[That this House notes with anxiety the continuing rapid reduction in the size of the United Kingdom-owned and registered merchant fleet; notes that this reduction is only partly offset by the increase in the number of United Kingdom-owned ships on overseas registers; expresses its concern at the adverse impact of these developments on the United Kingdom's and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defence capability and the United Kingdom economy, including shipbuilding, employment and the balance of payments account of the United Kingdom, notes the dearth of new investment in British-owned ships, whether new or secondhand, which alone can remedy the situation; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to take urgent steps in the forthcoming Budget to encourage such investment and to initiate action in the European Community to adopt domestic policies which will restore the profitability of ship owning and international policies to scrap surplus ships and unfair practices in shipbuilding and trading.]

I am sure that the Leader of the House will recognise the urgent need for a debate on the order on teachers' pay and conditions, which is part of the legislation that has so damaged relations in education by destroying the negotiating rights of teachers. I asked him before the Easter recess for a debate on the order. Can he now give us a date for a debate?

As the right hon. Gentleman may recall. I have previously pressed for an urgent debate in Government time on the Government's grossly inadequate policy on research and development. Has the right hon. Gentleman been able to arrange for such a debate, since it is obvious that there is great interest in the subject on both sides of the House and many hon. Members would want to speak?

Finally, the House is still waiting for a Government statement about trade relations with Japan. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a statement is made on the whole spectrum of trade relations early next week?

Mr. Biffen: I will take the points in the sequence in which they were presented by the right hon. Gentleman.

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will have noted that over many years it has been traditional to inform the House of the outcome of the pay review bodies by means of a written answer. Therefore, what is happening on this occasion is no different from what has happened many times previously. I ask him to contain his impatience for a few more moments when all will be revealed and we may have his plaudits.

With regard to the possibility of a debate on the merchant fleet, I recognise the interest in the House, which is evidenced by the early-day motion. Perhaps it is something that could be considered through the usual channels.

I note what the right hon. Gentleman says about the desirability of a debate on the order on teachers' pay. Clearly it concerns a matter which arouses a good deal of interest throughout the House, and I will take account of his representations.

I cannot offer the prospect of an early debate on research and development, but that is something that can be considered further through the usual channels.

I will certainly refer the right hon. Gentleman's request for a statement on trade relations with Japan to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who will in any case be answering questions on Wednesday.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend make arrangements for an early debate on the importance of maintaining unity within the NATO Alliance on the current disarmament talks?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend says. I agree that one of the most important current foreign

affairs questions is how NATO adjusts itself to the new situation. I cannot offer the prospect of an early debate on foreign affairs, but I will bear his comments in mind.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is growing evidence that some mentally handicapped people are being kept in institutions because there is no community care provided for them outside, and that some of them are being discharged without community care and have to fend for themselves? Does he find this as shocking as I do, and can he arrange for a debate on the subject?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman says. I am certain that the whole House shares his anxiety on this point. I will refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services so that it may be further considered.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing use of phoney opinion polls by certain unscrupulous people? Will he, at this opportune moment in the life of this Parliament, find time for a debate on the need for a satisfactory code of practice to underpin the professional standards of the majority of those in this industry, standards which unfortunately appear to elude the Liberal party whenever an election is in the offing?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend has said and the robust way in which it has been acclaimed in the Chamber. There is no early opportunity in Government time for the debate that he seeks and if legislation were required that would be a formidable obstacle over the next few weeks.

On the more general question of the use of bogus opinion polls, the whole circumstances in which we fight elections are covered not only by very explicit law but by what are believed to be appropriate conventions. I think that there would be deep distaste for any manipulative use of bogus opinion polls.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): May I support the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), who last week raised with the Leader of the House the Williams Holdings take-over bid for Norcros? Is the Leader of the House aware that this matter is a great problem in the Isle of Wight, where more than 200 employees' jobs are at stake? The bids are supposed to close next week. The right hon. Gentleman supports a Government who claim that industrial production is increasing. The take-over would do nothing of the sort for Norcros, which is a capable company, nor for my constituents. Will the right hon. Gentleman kindly ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to intervene in this matter before it is too late?

Mr. Biffen: I explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) the circumstances that had to attend that take-over bid. We have an Office of Fair Trading and a Monopolies and Mergers Commission which properly have a role to play, and this matter should not be the subject of direct political interference. However, I shall, of course, refer the hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): As today is St. George's day, of which I am sure my right hon. Friend is fully aware, would it be possible for once to have a debate on England in view of the amount of time and money that we spend discussing the affairs of other countries within the United Kingdom?

Mr. Biffen: May I say as an English Celt to an English Saxon that I believe that the English are sufficiently self-confident that they can go through life without the constant self-examination of parliamentary debates.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Will the Leader of the House have a word with the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with a view to his making a statement at the Dispatch Box next week on the organisation for the allocation of free fresh food from Europe, bearing in mind that he made a right cock-up of the last effort? He said that "we", meaning the Government, made a large contribution last time. I advise him that they did not make any contribution at all. In fact, people in charities in my constituency had to pay, out of their own pocket, for the cost of fuel, petrol and diesel oil to distribute the food to the people who wanted it. We need a statement to the effect that there will be proper organisation in the future.

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept those strictures about the role of my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Haynes: He is useless.

Mr. Biffen: I stand here between the hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend and I have to say — *[Interruption.]* I have a feeling that the hon. Gentleman had a rich point to put in agriculture questions earlier this afternoon and shows all the signs of frustration at not being able to put it. None the less, I shall refer his point to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Does my right hon. Friend recall that I asked for a statement from the Secretary of State for Defence regarding the accidental dropping of a Sidewinder missile in the Devon, North constituency? May I ask that a reply be given as a matter of courtesy to my constituents in the near future?

Mr. Biffen: Yes. Following our exchange, to which my hon. Friend has just referred, I got in touch with the Ministry of Defence. I understand that an inquiry is proceeding and that the Ministry of Defence will write to my hon. Friend once the outcome of the inquiry is known.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have an early and urgent debate on the abuse of overseas registration arrangements following the issue of forms by the so-called independent non-political British community committee in Paris, together with Conservative party propaganda? It turns out that this organisation, which the Prime Minister has informed me is independent and non-political, shares premises, address, telephone, officers, secretary and, no doubt, political views with the British Conservative Association. Is the Leader of the House aware that a Home Office Minister has told me in a written answer today that the Government are reviewing the need for guidance to be given so that this should not happen? That is not good enough. A statement, an apology and a full inquiry are required now to avoid further abuse in this disgraceful way through a fraudulent front?

Mr. Biffen: I should have thought from the hon. and learned Gentleman's description that the Government's reaction showed clearly that they were worried about the

[Mr. Biffen]

issue which he raised, but naturally I shall bring to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office his preference for a statement.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I support calls for an early debate on teachers' pay and conditions so that we can examine the tragic position that some teachers in some unions are fighting yesterday's battles rather than for today's and tomorrow's needs for educational reform? In particular may we look in that debate at possible ways of achieving the successor to Burnham at as early a date as possible?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, because I have already given a sympathetic response to the Leader of the Opposition. My hon. Friend reminds me of the widespread interest in this topic which he shares.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Did the Leader of the House see the programme on television last night about data bank information? If he did, he will probably share the anxiety of many millions of British people at the obvious weaknesses in the legislation which allow blatant intervention in people's private lives and, more seriously, the production of erroneous information. Will he arrange for the appropriate Minister to make a statement to the House on the contents of the programme and the serious consequences exposed?

Mr. Biffen: I did not see the programme, so I cannot sensibly comment on what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I shall certainly pass on his request for a statement to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on early-day motion 897 standing in my name and the names of several of my hon. Friends?

[That this House expresses its abhorrence at the showing of a video entitled How to be a Lesbian in 35 Minutes shown at a Haringey Council community centre recently to an audience, including young people, and calls upon the Government to require local authorities to submit sexually explicit videos and literature to the Department of Education before such material can be shown to the public.]

It relates to a video entitled "How to be a Lesbian in 35 Minutes" which was shown recently at the Labour-controlled Haringey council community centre when disabled teenagers were present. As its showing seems to contradict the words of the Leader of the Opposition reported in *The Sun* today which were that there would be no possibility of attitudes being imposed by his party on people who were not gay or lesbian, would not such a debate enable him to explain himself and to reassure the parents of teenagers with daughters living in that area that their children are not in danger of corruption?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has made the point the more forceful for being succinct than it might have been made if Government time had been provided for the Leader of the Opposition to make his somewhat equivocal position clearer than it seemed in *The Sun*. *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) thinks that that is any reflection on him, I shall withdraw the comment at once. My hon. Friend's point is valid and certainly deserves to be aired in the House. I very much hope that he is successful in securing an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): As the Government have been reluctant or even afraid to provide time to discuss their proposal to privatise Rolls-Royce and the Opposition have had to provide time for a debate, will the Leader of the House now give an assurance that the Government will provide time for at least a half-day debate on aerospace matters, especially on the airbus A330 and A340 projects which have severe implications for the industry?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate that there is interest across the Floor of the House in launch aid for those projects. I shall bear that interest in mind, but for the moment, given the demands on the time of the House made by the Finance Bill, I can offer no early prospect of a debate.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Has my right hon. Friend seen the quite extraordinary assertion made by three Labour members of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that relief for mortgage interest is now largely a means of tax avoidance on investment income and their recommendation that the relief should be phased out? Will he so organise next week's debates on the Finance Bill as to enable us to debate that important subject so that each of the parties can make its position clear?

Mr. Biffen: I should have thought that the very topics that will be debated next week on the Finance Bill would enable that issue to be given the most full and appropriate airing.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Leader of the House share the widespread concern about the ongoing crisis in Scottish prisons which culminated in the events at Perth prison over the weekend? In view of the large numbers of people sent to prison in Scotland—the highest for any identifiable western country, including many for the non-payment of fines—is he surprised that none of his Scottish ministerial colleagues has made a statement on these matters? Are they not worthy of urgent debate?

Mr. Biffen: It is certainly an important topic, and the entire House will agree with the hon. Gentleman to that extent. However, I must state quite candidly that this is the time of year when Government time is necessarily limited. I can offer no prospect of an early debate on the topic in Government time. Of course, the hon. Gentleman may wish to try all the other opportunities available to a Back Bencher.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I agree with the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) about his request for a debate on Government launch aid for the A330 and A340 airbus projects — this matter is important as it affects many constituencies and the future of the aerospace industry — but will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House take more seriously the request made by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for a debate on community care? Before irrevocable decisions are taken with reference to the disposal of psychiatric hospital sites, it is clearly most important that the House should be able to debate the future of the mentally ill and mentally handicapped.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree that it would be a tragedy if refuges and asylums were completely taken away from the mentally ill. I refer particularly to Parkside hospital in my constituency, which is under threat in the long term. In the light of the report of the Select Committee on Social Services produced a few months ago, will my right hon. Friend permit a full debate on that critical and vital issue?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes his point with the authority of one who graced the Select Committee. I fully accept the importance of the topic, and it was because of that that I replied in the spirit that I did to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Are we to have a statement next week from the Foreign Secretary regarding the position in South Africa and yesterday's brutal killings, or are the Government concerned only with the denial of rights in Eastern Europe?

Is the Leader of the House aware of the widespread concern about possible conflict between outside interests and constituency interest? Has not virtually every Conservative Member some outside interest? Indeed, if there is one Conservative Member without, I have a certain amount of sympathy with him because he is being discriminated against. Is there a case for a Select Committee to look into that matter, particularly after the excellent point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) yesterday?

Mr. Biffen: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's first point, of course I will refer his request for a statement to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. With regard to his second point, which was redolent with innuendo, the appointment of any new Committee is a matter for the House. If the hon. Gentleman believes that any hon. Member is behaving dishonourably, I hope that he will be candid enough to name names.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that all public servants in this country are entitled to count war service towards their pensions except if that public service was overseas? Is that not an indefensible anomaly? Will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to explain his Department's mean attitude towards these thoroughly worthy people?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is a seasoned campaigner on this topic and he will not expect me to be any more forthcoming now than I have been in the past. However, I will most certainly draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make a statement about the recent shady business deal regarding the PCW syndicate that has been put before the names at Lloyd's? Is he aware that it was widely reported in most of the papers in the week before the recess that, as a result of the £40 million fraud, for which no action was taken by the Government, the police, the fraud squad or the Attorney-General, losses of £600 million were sustained by names of Lloyd's? On 12 April the *Sunday Telegraph* said that the names would not have to put forward all the money involved in order to take part in the rescue plan, only participate in a deal of £134 million and the rest would come from tax relief. Does not that show the double standards of the operation? There is one law for the bankers and the names at Lloyd's and another for the pensioners who are offered only 80p a week.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman makes a number of accusations upon which I shall make no comment, and which I shall certainly not endorse. He has asked that those observations be made available to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I shall see that that is done.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) when he said that there would be no time for a debate on bogus opinion polls? Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are elections on 7 May and that the Liberal party is up to its usual dirty trick of publishing bogus opinion polls? Would not such a debate give the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) an opportunity to make a personal statement about why he should be peddling such polls?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend demonstrates with great skill that such points can be argued without the necessity to have a debate.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food demonstrated clearly this afternoon during agriculture questions, the Government have been unable to control agricultural spending in the EEC and as a result there is to be a 20 per cent. cut in the amount spent from the social fund in Britain. I believe that that 20 per cent. cut is to be taken by voluntary organisations which at present receive a substantial sum of money from the social fund. Should not there be a statement on the precise implications of such cuts in the social fund to voluntary organisations in Britain?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Later this afternoon.

Mr. Biffen: As my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who is a good commentator on these matters, says, there will be scope for some of those points to be made later this afternoon. It may well be that the policies to which the hon. Lady refers necessitate Community instruments, in which case they would be considered through the normal processes of scrutiny, but I shall certainly bear that point in mind.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members would welcome a debate on the pay and conditions of nurses and related professions, not only to demonstrate the importance which all hon. Members attach to the work done by those people but to draw attention to the Government's positive record, and finally to remind the House of the record of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), when he had some responsibility for those matters, which bears rather sharp contrast with his statements today.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. I cannot say anything in advance of the publication of the answer to which I referred earlier this afternoon, but doubtless, when the House has had a chance to consider the evidence that will then be made available, it may judge that it is an appropriate occasion for a debate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Now that the Guinness board has admitted that the squalid affair of the takeover of Distillers has cost its shareholders £125 million, should not we have an opportunity to examine those matters on the Floor of the House in a debate on the operation of company law? Is not the Leader of the House a little concerned that a part of that £125 million may be offset against the tax liabilities of that company? Are not those matters which should now be debated in Parliament, and surely before the next election?

Mr. Biffen: I am fairly certain that the tax conditions relating to the arrangements to which the hon. Gentleman referred come within the purview of that part of the Finance Bill which will be debated on the Floor of the House. As to the wider issue of debating company law, of course I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's interest to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a need to find time to debate the totally bogus opinion polls that were peddled by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and the Liberal party in Greater London last weekend? As no such poll took place, is it not monstrous to try to twist people's voting intentions by such a fraud?

Mr. Biffen: The position that has beeen outlined by my hon. Friend gives rise to genuine disquiet about the extent to which opinion polls can be manipulated to try to produce induced election voting behaviour. I gave a fairly measured reply to my hon. Friends who raised the matter, but I take account of what my hon. Friend has said and I congratulate him on the part that he has played in making the public more aware of this episode.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): As today is William Shakespeare's birthday, may the House have a debate on literature, not on the brilliant works of William Shakespeare, but on the works of Leicester teachers and the association of Leicester teachers who have published a book called "Outlaws in the Classroom—Give School Gays a Better Deal"? Does he agree that our children are in desperate danger of being corrupted by teachers writing books that promote homosexuality as the norm? May we have a debate to protect children and to ensure that heterosexual relationships are encouraged and promoted in a family, loving way in our schools?

Mr. Biffen: These great issues never seem to happen in Shropshire. I am sure that the local political situation which reflects that kind of proselytising of particular tastes and behaviours will centre on the election campaign in Leicester and will, I am sure, help to sustain and enhance my hon. Friend's majority.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 11 MAY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. John Cohen
Mr. John Watts
Mr. John Fraser

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the nine motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Milk (Community Outgoers' Scheme) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations (S.I., 1987, No. 425) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Definition of Capital Expenses (Scotland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Occupiers' Liability (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Limitation (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Enduring Powers of Attorney (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Enduring Powers of Attorney (Northern Ireland Consequential Amendment) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Home Grown Cereals Authority Levy Scheme (Approval) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 671) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the New Valuation Lists Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Agriculture

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 4844/87, CAP Price Proposals 1987-88, ADD 1 + COR 2, ADD 2, and ADD 3 + COR 1, 4224/87, Situation in the Agricultural Markets in 1986, 4446/87, Milk Sector Reforms, 4236/87, Disposal of Intervention Butter, 5046/87, Disposal of Intervention Butter (Court of Auditors Report), 4537/87, Intervention arrangements for butter and skimmed milk powder and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's two un-numbered explanatory memoranda on national aid to French milk producers are relevant.]

4.3 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): The main documents that are listed as relevant to our debate today are those that contain the proposals of the European Commission for changes in farm support prices and mechanisms for 1987-88. It is appropriate that the House should consider them today, since the negotiations upon them will commence in earnest in Luxembourg on Monday.

These proposals, like all other decisions on farm policy, have to be considered against a wider background; indeed, a worldwide one. The problems that face farming in Europe also characterise farming in other parts of the world. The supply of most major products exceeds demand—a situation that results in surplus stocks, low world prices and high expenditure on support measures. Farmers outside as well as inside the European Community are having to adjust. In countries such as Australia and New Zealand, where world prices feed through directly in farmers' returns, this adjustment is sharp and painful. It is not surprising that agriculture has been singled out as a major topic for the new round of GATT negotiations that were agreed last year in Punta del Este.

It was against that background that the Government responded to demands for a strategy for United Kingdom farming and for the rural economy generally. As the House knows, on 10 March we published a number of documents dealing with different aspects of rural policy. In the document "Farming UK" we have set out our view of the many pressures for change which face the farming industry at the present time, and the way in which the industry as a whole must adapt to this situation.

The emphasis can no longer be on expanding production. The level of production in Europe must therefore be brought back closer to the level of consumption. Therefore, we have also to look at alternative uses for land. At the same time, there must be more attention to the needs of the market and to the demands of the environment. The document explains the Government's programme for assisting the industry to move in these directions, and I shall have more to say about that shortly.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fact that we can grow increasingly more of our food needs, particularly new hybrids, on a lower acreage, should be seen not as summoning a period of crisis for the farming industry but rather as a period of opportunity, particularly for conservation and opening up woodlands to public access? Does he think that we should increase grants for broadleafed trees and be even more generous than the Government have so far proposed?

Mr. Jopling: We have made available a large amount of new money to support alternative land uses. We must see how that scheme works out before we start thinking of making any changes. With regard to my hon. Friend's first point, I am aware, of course, that there are many exciting new hybrid varieties coming along, some of which have been bred in a distinguished way in my hon. Friend's constituency, which will make changes in future. The one thing that agriculture must not do is to get Luddite and believe that it can set aside new developments. If it does that, undoubtedly we will find that the competitive edge is taken by other countries and other farmers.

So far as the common agricultural policy itself is concerned, the document set out the principles underlying the approach that the Governmnt have taken and will continue to take. First, we have to reduce costs and tackle surpluses, by bringing supply and demand in the Community as a whole into better balance. The principal instrument must be price policy, but this should be supplemented by other appropriate measures. Secondly, market forces must play a greater role in determining production. The role of intervention has to be correspondingly reduced. Thirdly, there must be evenhanded and fair treatment between member states, between the different regions of the United Kingdom and between farmers, traders, the food industry and consumers. These principles will guide the Government in the negotiations that are about to start in earnest, and it is in the light of them that we should consider the Commission's proposals.

With certain important exceptions, I believe that the Commission is on the right track. It has to start, of course, from the serious budgetary situation that confronts the Community today. Four main themes run through its proposals: first, the continuation of a tough price policy, involving a freeze on the prices of most products and price cuts for others; secondly, some further substantial moves to limit intervention buying and restore it to its proper role as a safety net in the market; thirdly, the extension and strengthening of the concept of guarantee thresholds, whereby the full level of price support is linked to a specified quantum of output; and, fourthly, changes in the complex green money system.

While I would have preferred the Commission to go further in a number of respects than it has done, its basic approach is the right one and those four points are those that should be addressed.

In one respect we are in an unusual situation in these negotiations, in that the Community has only recently, in December, taken major decisions on milk and beef, which will apply for the 1987-88 marketing year and indeed beyond. As the House will recall, after very long negotiations, decisions of principle were reached on these two commodities under the British presidency in December, and the detailed implementation of those decisions was settled this year in the initial meetings of the Council under the succeeding Belgian presidency.

The Select Committee has drawn the attention of the House to the regulations implementing the decisions on milk and they are also listed as relevant to the debate. For both milk and beef the support provided through the intervention system was, quite rightly, reduced. I remind the House that the variable premium arrangements for

[Mr. Jopling]

beef, so important to the United Kingdom producers, were maintained and safeguarded for two years. That is the longest run for this system that we have ever succeeded in negotiating.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): While recognising the valuable contribution to the British beef sector that my right hon. Friend has made by securing that commitment, may I ask him what progress has been made towards encouraging other member states to come round to the same line of thought, so that the system of getting beef down people's throats rather than putting it into intervention may continue?

Mr. Jopling: We made a move forward in the December negotiation, in that although some countries were strongly opposed to it we established a new premium for beef. It is a weaker one than the one that we enjoy, but at least it means that the other members of the Community are moving over to the premium philosophy rather than sticking to the philosophy of intervention that has governed the beef sector for many years. We are making progress there. I know my hon. Friend agrees that we are far better off with our beef variable premium system than we would be if we embraced the new Community premium arrangement.

This year's price-fixing negotiation will be the first for years in which the United Kingdom has not had to fight off opposition to the beef variable premium. However, I am well aware of the current concerns of beef producers. The addition of cull cow beef to the market could cause problems in the future. This matter was mentioned at Question Time. However, recent beef prices have been only 1 per cent. or so below last year's prices. I shall continue to watch this market very carefully.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): In the near future, is there any chance of persuading our friends in Europe to accept a scheme for beef similar to the one that we have for lamb?

Mr. Jopling: The variable premium arrangement for beef is similar to the variable premium that we have for sheepmeat. The hon. Gentleman knows that, and also knows that the variable premium for sheepmeat is not practised in other countries of the Community. I think that France has expressed a growing interest in moving towards the system that we have in the United Kingdom for sheepmeat. That is a helpful move in the right direction.

The main feature of the milk decisions was. of course, the cut of 9·5 per cent. in Community output, to be achieved over two years mainly through quota cuts and suspensions, but with compensation. I am glad that the flexibility provided through the formula B arrangements and regional transfers, which the Commission originally proposed to abolish, were retained. That was a big bonus for us. This flexibility is of special benefit to the United Kingdom. Finally, the Council endorsed a Commission programme for the disposal of intervention stocks, with reimbursement to member states deferred until the period 1989 to 1993. Given that the decisions on milk quotas will prevent the stocks from building up again, these exceptional financing arrangements were justified.

In the light of the major decisions taken in December, the Commission's price fixing proposals contain little new on milk and beef. However, one proposal that it makes in this area—to end intervention for salted butter—is one that I shall oppose. The market demand in the United Kingdom and Ireland is essentially for salted butter, and it would make no sense if butter producers in these two countries had to make a different type of butter simply to put it into intervention. The Commission rightly picks on cereals as a sector calling for major changes.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are certain problems about the manner in which the French have managed to secure agreement in the Council of Ministers for national aids to France's own farmers? Those aids will enable them to receive social security payments when they have a litreage of, I think, 60,000 a year or less. Are similar arrangements proposed to assist small and medium-sized dairy farmers in the United Kingdom when they are in similar circumstances?

Mr. Jopling: The Council of Ministers discussed this arrangement. It was originally proposed specifically to help smaller farmers, most of whom expected to retire shortly. After discussion the Council agreed that it would allow the arrangement. I think that my hon. Friend has had this question answered before. It was with certain mixed feelings, and in the interests of much wider and more important settlements, that we agreed to the arrangement.

As I have said, the cereals sector calls for major changes. It is crucially important, and the House should note carefully, that the Commission has estimated that unless firm action is taken, stocks of cereals in the Community could reach a disastrous 100 million tonnes by 1993. The Commission's proposals rightly focus not just on the support prices themselves, but on intervention arrangements. Intervention would be available for only four months in the latter part of the crop year, and the monthly increases would be applied to the price only in the last three of those months. This is the right approach. We have always said that intervention should be a last resort and that it should not become a market option in its own right.

On prices, the Commission proposes to cut the feed grain price by 2·5 per cent. and thus widen the differential between bread wheat and feed grain to 7·5 per cent. This is realistic and is in line with what the market would produce. Lower feed grain prices benefit livestock producers and make our exports more competitive. The record United Kingdom exports of grain this season, which will total about 10 million tonnes, have undoubtedly been helped by the lower feed grain prices agreed last year.

This is a tough package of measures. It adds up to an appreciable cut in effective support and I do not expect grain farmers to welcome it. However, the cereals sector must be tackled seriously in view of the perils ahead, and I believe that this is essentially the right way in which to do so.

As I have said before, action on the support level itself needs to be accompanied by additional measures. The House is aware that I advocated last year a cereals land diversion scheme, involving incentives to farmers to take land out of the crop. My intention was to stimulate discussion, and that was indeed the effect. I am glad to see that the National Farmers Union now goes along with the idea of a voluntary approach. Key elements of my ideas

were taken up in the socio-structural measure, which again was agreed in principle under the British presidency and put into detailed legislative form under my successor.

Under this measure, member states will be obliged to come forward with national schemes to encourage farmers to "extensify" the production of certain commodities, including cereals, and also to encourage conversion from surplus to non-surplus production. Methods of intensifying production can include leaving land unused, and the concept is thus very similar to the one that I put forward last year.

We shall need to see how far the new measure will be applied uniformly in all member states of the Community and whether its effectiveness can be demonstrated. If so, it will be a useful step towards the policy that I have been advocating. My Department will, in consultation with the interests concerned, work out in detail what needs to be done to implement the decision in the United Kingdom.

Another important and expensive idea, particularly following the enlargement of the Community, relates to oil and fats. Here I cannot approve the Commission's proposals as they stand. They rightly involve reductions in support, achieved essentially through strengthening and extending the guarantee threshold system. However, the Commission has chosen to link this with a proposal for a consumer tax, disguised under the title of an "edible oil price stabilisation scheme", and I am thoroughly opposed to that. It is no proper part of CAP reform to provide extra funding through a tax on consumers, particularly the least prosperous consumers. Moreover, it would damage the Community's trading relations with a large number of countries, including some of the poorest. It would, in particular, be folly for the Community to provoke a new quarrel over agriculture with the United States so soon after settling the last.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): My right hon. Friend will have noted earlier the unanimous support of the House for his stance. However, does he believe that our colleagues in the Community understand the dramatic adverse impact that the measure would have on Third-world countries, especially Malaysia, Indonesia and other countries in south-east Asia?

Mr. Jopling: I am certain that it would have that effect. I visited Malaysia last year, and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has recently returned from the Cameroons. We have both come firmly to that conclusion, and it strengthens our view. I am not alone within the Community in my opposition to this part of the Commission's proposal, and I hope that the Commission will be persuaded to think again and withdraw it. In any event, I shall continue to oppose it firmly.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Morris) asked the Minister what efforts had been made to acquaint the EEC with the effect of the proposal on the Third world. When the Minister met the Select Committee on European Legislation and sent a note to the Committee, he agreed that the Commission's proposals could involve an increase in margarine prices of 15 to 30 per cent., or possibly more. Has he communicated that estimate to the Commission to reinforce his comments, which I am sure have the backing of the whole House?

Mr. Jopling: I believe that the Commission is fully aware of the background figures, and the point will no doubt arise again in our discussions next week.

Finally, on specific commodities, I should draw attention to the revival of the Commission's 1986 proposal to limit payment of the annual ewe premium to 1,000 ewes per farm in the less-favoured areas, and to 500 elsewhere. This is obviously contrary to the principles to which I have already referred. I opposed it successfully last year, and we shall do so again this year.

Turning to the green currency system, the question at issue is the common price level: that is, the level towards which divergent national prices should in principle be aligned. In 1984 it was tied to the strongest currency, and it has in practice been dragged up by the rising strength of the deutschmark. To the extent that countries have taken advantage of this upward movement to raise their own national prices, I believe that the change has been inflationary, and the Commission seems to agree. Its idea is to prevent price inflation in the future by requiring offsetting reductions in common prices in the two years after each realignment of the EMS.

The effect on support prices in negative MCA countries such as the United Kingdom would be neutral, but in countries such as Germany, national prices would be reduced. That proposal is on the right lines. The question is whether the Commission might have gone further and proposed to abolish the link with the deutschmark altogether.

The Commission has made a number of proposals for the devaluations of various member states' green rates. As I believe the House is aware, it has proposed a 4 per cent. devaluation of the green pound. Given the position in which we find ourselves and the problems of our industry —I am thinking especially of the beef sector—I shall make it clear to the Commission that we shall want to improve on that figure. I shall certainly expect to secure a bigger change than has France or the Republic of Ireland, which have smaller MCAs than we have.

The Commission's proposals, as I have said, are designed to respond to the Community's budgetary as well as to its market position. The Commission estimates that its proposals, taken together, would save 1,300 million ecu in 1987 and 3,600 million in 1988. But 500 million this year and 2,100 million next year would come from the proposed oils and fats tax. Therefore, the savings must be measured against the huge financial problem currently facing the Community.

The Commission estimates that, disregarding its proposals, the available resources fall short of what is needed to finance the CAP in 1987 by nearly 4,000 million ecu. It is therefore very important that the savings proposed by the Commission, other than those arising from the oils and fats tax, are secured. Indeed, the Government believe it essential that additional savings are found, either during the price fixing itself or subsequently, to avoid major difficulties arising later in the year. The 1987 budget must be balanced. There is no question of the Government condoning a breach of the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling.

This then, is the Government's approach to the Commission's proposals. While the CAP is much the biggest single influence on our farming industry, full weight must also be given to the action that we can take on a national basis. As I have said, our document "Farming UK" looks at the initiatives that the

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Government have already taken in the countryside and that we shall be taking in the future. Those initiatives include first, the new farm woodland scheme, on which we have issued a separate consultation document as a prelude to legislation. The objectives of the new scheme are various: the diversion of land from agriculture; the improvement of landscape, wildlife habitats, recreation and even tourism; support for farm incomes and employment; and, of course, timber production, particularly if farmers can be encouraged to adopt the methods that are necessary for high quality timber production. I am glad to say that the scheme has already been welcomed by a range of interests.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): When will my right hon. Friend publish further details of the various grants? We have been given the outlines of the various schemes, but when will we be given the nitty-gritty?

Mr. Jopling: I said a moment ago that we had already issued a consultation document on the new farm woodland scheme. I hope that diversification will take place as soon as possible, in view of the urgent need to diversify.

Secondly, I envisage further expansion of traditional forestry, particularly on better land. That will also help with surpluses and rural employment. Thirdly, we aim to double the resources that are committed to environmentally sensitive areas. Uptake in the existing areas has got off to a promising start. In future, as a result of the socio-structural measures, the expenditure will attract a Community contribution. We shall be designating new areas, and I hope to be able to announce these within the next two months.

Fourthly, there is our scheme to help farm diversification, including new assistance for marketing the products of diversified businesses. A consultation paper will appear shortly and we shall be inviting comments on the scope and coverage of the new scheme. The sort of activities that we should like to grant-aid are facilities for visitors on farms, the processing of farm products and recreational and amenity facilities.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): My right hon. Friend has been running ahead rather. If there are to be afforestation schemes, will he consider controlling those schemes so that the tourist characteristics of our country are not lost? Will he also suggest to his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that special grants should be given for doing up redundant steadings and farm buildings, to be used for small business purposes and as dwellings? Although all these measures are good, does my right hon. Friend not appreciate that unless we solve farming finance in this country, particularly in Scotland, by examining the square root of the 4 per cent. devaluation of the green pound—[HON. MEMBERS: "The square."] I apologise; unless we examine the square of the 4 per cent. we shall come nowhere near the real figure.

Mr. Jopling: I think that every farmer in the country would have a heart attack if he heard my hon. and learned Friend refer to the square root of 4 per cent. I note what he said about the controlled expansion of woodlands. Indeed, that point is very much in my mind. I agree that diversification provides a major opportunity to do up old buildings. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has provided a great deal of planning encouragement for this purpose. I am unable to answer questions about Scotland, but I presume that the same applies to Scotland. If my hon. and learned Friend looks at the papers that the Government published in March, he will see that they contain a number of references to the opportunities that we envisage for redundant farm buildings.

Finally, we plan to place more emphasis in our research and development and advisory programmes on novel crops and livestock — anything from United Kingdom production of cashmere wool to improving production techniques for lupins and sunflower seeds. Again, this initiative could be of interest in a Community context because of the aid scheme for conversion to non-surplus crops that is to be introduced as a result of the socio-structures package.

This programme is designed to encourage farmers to adapt their output to the changing pattern of demand; to divert their land to products that are not in surplus, including trees; to diversify their businesses to make full use of their land and buildings and the skill and expertise of farm and family labour; and in some areas to farm their land less intensively. Overall, it provides voluntary options for those farmers who are looking for additional enterprises.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My right hon. Friend knows that there is a degree of worry that foodstuffs, which at present are not in surplus, will come into surplus if there is a flight from beef. Does he have any proposals to prevent a flight from beef into lamb, which would result in a surplus of lamb?

Mr. Jopling: I understand the problem to which my hon. Friend refers, and I remind him of one area in which I am trying to take his point into account. In the proposals to divert land use from the production of cereals, we have made it clear that we do not intend to provide assistance to anyone who moves out of cereals into grass, because that would be patently unfair to the sheep producers to whom my hon. Friend has just referred.

The common purpose underlying all my inititatives, and those announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, is a healthy rural economy based on an enterprising, adaptable and competitive agriculture and the enhancement of our attractive and incomparable rural environment. I am sure that the House will want to endorse that theme.

Together with CAP reform, these measures are inseparable elements of our overall approach to provide a framework in which enterprise and initiative — qualities that characterise our industry — can be rewarded and in which the rural economy and the environment can be enhanced.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I should be very grateful if my right hon. Friend would refer to what he believes will be the impact of these proposals on consumer prices. He has not mentioned that element. It seems to me that the result of these arrangements will be further increases in the shop price of commodities that are in surplus. Will he tell me whether I am right, or wrong?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend is right when he says that some of these proposals would have a considerable influence on the cost of food. That is one reason why we

are implacably opposed to the one item that has the biggest effect on the cost of food—the oils and fats tax. The House ought to recall the Government's record since we came to power. Food prices have risen only at the rate of 6 per cent. a year since 1979, compared with over 16 per cent. a year when the Labour party was in power.

Mr. Spearing: That was the transitional period.

Mr Jopling: This year's negotiations on common prices will be no easier than in the past. Some member states have already demonstrated their hostility to the proposals. I cannot say when agreement will be reached, but I am determined that the measures agreed must be effective in taking forward the battle against surpluses and their associated astronomic costs; and that they must do so in a way that does not discriminate against the United Kingdom. This is the approach that the Government have consistently adopted, and will continue to adopt, in the knowledge that we are succeeding, and will continue to succeed, in safeguarding the agriculture industry's place as the provider of food for the nation and the cornerstone of the rural economy.

4.41 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): This debate is about more than the documents that we are strictly considering, and certainly more than the price review proposals. To concentrate on those alone would be short-sighted because at this stage it is impossible to forecast how negotiations will turn out. All that one can say with confidence is that they will be protracted and tedious and, if in nothing else, we are united in our sympathy for the Minister, who will have to undergo those protracted and tedious negotiations.

On the three items of concern in the price negotiations, the Opposition echo the criticisms made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Commission should know that he carries the views of a united House when he negotiates on the three matters that have been mentioned.

On the issue of the oils and fats tax, it is novel to me to discover that, because one is unable to sell one product, one does not drop the price of that product in order to sell it, but raises the price of its competitor product. That is a novel economic doctrine that deserves to be more widely understood than it is. It will raise the United Kingdom food bill by about £300 million per annum. That needs to be stressed time and again. It will raise the price of some of the cooking oils that are available to the housewife by up to 90 per cent. If that were to be forced through, it would be a retrograde step and a source of great hardship and enmity towards the idea of the CAP.

The annual ewe premium, which it is proposed should be paid annually on the first 500 ewes in a holding and on the first 1,000 in less favoured areas, clearly discriminates against the British farming system and must be opposed. So, too, must be the suspension of intervention for salted butter. These are not party political issues; they are matters in which the United Kingdom appears to have been singled out for discriminatory treatment and they must be whole-heartedly opposed.

The debate gives us an opportunity that is rare in the House to debate, in as general terms as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will allow, the melancholy story of how far the Council of Ministers has progressed in its task of reimposing control on the common agricultural policy, and how far it still has to go. The answers to those questions are respectively, "nowhere", and "a long way". During our short recess, lamentations have issued forth from the Commission about the imminent bankruptcy of the EEC—yet again. I say that because it is now an almost annual refrain. I believe that many people have ceased to take it seriously for that reason. We were told that the EEC agriculture budget was going to overrun by £3 billion this year, but M. Delors has now asked for a £3·5 billion extra subvention to keep the Community from going bankrupt.

That is quite the wrong way to deal with the matter. We are making a £400 million loan to the Community for butter on advantageous terms and making a further £600 million subvention in the form of loans, so we are being asked to lend the Community £1 billion in the near future to prevent it from going bankrupt. Budgetary control, not increased income, is needed.

The great paradox of the CAP is that, while it costs us more and more, it has proved inadequate to maintain farm incomes in the long run. At Question Time, figures on that were quoted which I believe were generally accepted. Perhaps no such system could work, but I reflect on the fact that, from time to time, the Government talk about others throwing money at problems. There is a real danger in the CAP that many members of the Council of Ministers believe in throwing money at this problem in the hope that that will somehow solve it.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): We all agree with the hon. Gentleman that we do not like the prospect of an oil tax. If the EEC is right about the shortfall that will occur if that tax is rejected by all the countries concerned, what alternative would the hon. Gentleman propose to make up the shortfall?

Mr. John: The question is addressed to the Minister and myself, because we are united in our opposition to the tax. The Minister has kindly indicated that he will allow me to answer the question on his behalf.

The issue is a serious one. Obviously, the shortfall is being partly disguised. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not falling into the trap of saying that we must pay an oil and fats tax to diguise the harshness of the position. That makes no sense, either in dietary or economic terms. Perhaps this does not reassure the hon. Gentleman, but the answer is that, with more immediacy and clarity than the Commission and the Council of Ministers have yet managed, we must tackle the problem of overspending and over-production. We can readily get a faultless analysis of the position year after year. We have the common agricultural policy review, which analyses what has gone wrong and why we are overspending, but the solutions offered are limp and meaningless. We must be conscious of that.

We must also be conscious of the sensitivity of food to price movements. Food is peculiarly sensitive to price increases — especially fresh food. We must take into account not only the effect of the price review, but the latest Euromania to issue forth from Brussels, which has been widely quoted—the insistence of the Commission, under the aegis of Lord Cockfield, that VAT be imposed on food. If that happens, and VAT is levied at the full 15 per cent., about £3·2 billion a year would be raised. That would be the extra bill for food in this country. Even if it

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were charged at a concessionary rate, the addition to the cost of food would still be enormous and its effect would be considerable. Such a tax would be truly regressive, in the sense that poorer families spend a higher proportion of their income on food than do the more well off. Therefore, the tax will bear hardest on the poor in our community, further erode the markets for fresh foods and destroy the hope that people in this country might be encouraged to eat more healthily and in accordance with their own preferences, rather than being penalised by price and forced to adopt a less salubrious diet.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech. Will he be explicit about what Labour party policy is on redressing the budgetary problem to which my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) drew his attention?

Mr. John: The hon. Gentleman must be the only one not to have listened to the Minister in the last couple of months, and must therefore be unaware of the documents that I and my colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench have issued on the subject of agriculture. I should be happy to make an exception to my charging rule in this case and supply him with a free copy——

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): We all want to know.

Mr. John: Without being immodest, I am the only best-selling author who gets nearer to bankruptcy the more copies he gives to people. I am not too keen on being a general provider of goodies, but if the hon. Gentleman will do me the kindness of examining the argument that is set out carefully and in detail in our document, he will see that we must bring production and consumption into line——

Sir Peter Mills: How?

Mr. John: We believe that that should be done by quotas imposed over the whole range of the regime. The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) need not be surprised. He knows my document and he knows of the proposals—*[Interruption.]* I understand the hon. Gentleman to say that he cannot read. Perhaps illiteracy is no part of membership of the House. I cannot possibly afford to provide him with an illustrated copy of the document.

I wish to deal with the question of the effect of VAT upon food. I believe that the Minister was less than reassuring when he said that the Treasury will need to study the proposal carefully. That is not what we want. In the light of the horrendous effects on the population, we want a categorical assurance that the Government will oppose the imposition of VAT upon food in the interests of producers as well as of consumers. [HON. MEMBERS: "He said that."] He did not say that about VAT. With respect to the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), whose hearing is obviously defective this afternoon, the Minister did not mention the subject of VAT on food. I will happily give way to the Minister if he will say that we oppose the imposition of VAT on food and will continue to do so. I invite the Minister to speak.

What is undeniable and undenied is that we are unable to consume what is being produced. Surpluses, although varying according to climatic conditions—it was not only salesmanship but the Spanish drought that helped our grain sales this summer—are rising inexorably. The problem of how to avoid that is what the CAP debate is all about.

I shall deal with two of the short-term palliatives that have been tried this year in just one of the regimes—dairy products. First, we had the food aid for the needy scheme. Although we were all glad to see that the amounts distributed were disposed of and that people benefited from them, the figures are not quite as good as stated. To begin with, there are three commodities available that we did not distribute at all: olive oil, which is perhaps understandable; sugar, on the basis that there was no demand; and cereals. The United Kingdom was the only country not to distribute any cereals. In milk and cheese the United Kingdom was third in the list of countries according to the amount of distribution. In butter and beef we distributed the most. I again pay tribute to the charities that worked so hard.

However, basic flaws in the scheme are apparent. Indeed, in fairness to the Minister of State, they were apparent from the inception of the scheme, as he mentioned. For example, we do not know how many people benefited from the scheme and what proportion of those eligible actually received the goods to which they were entitled. We do not know where distribution took place properly and where it did not. However, I am sure that what the charities most regret—this comes back to the point we were making during Question Time—is the lack of notice. That meant that the charities had to expend more money on administration. That money could have been used better in fulfilling their normal primary purposes. What has been forgotten is that many of the charities have a lot of useful work to do other than the distribution of food aid, and by charging them for the outward distribution of the food that primary purpose has been inhibited.

Most misleading of all has been the Ministry's propaganda. It has combined an unwillingness to accept what went wrong with an exaggeration of the British effort. Let me repeat, so that the Minister of State can either confirm or deny this in his reply, that whether one takes as a measure of performance overall tonnage distributed, per capita or overall coverage of products, the United Kingdom was not the top country according to distribution. The Minister and I have had an exchange of correspondence and views about this in the past, and I would be grateful for his views now.

However, in essence I believe that the scheme was a stalking horse for a much larger scheme whereby 181,500 tonnes of butter has just been disposed of to Russia. That butter had already been bought into intervention at 49p per 250g pack. Its sale price to Russia is 3·3p per pack —7 per cent. of the intervention price. I believe that the total cost of recent schemes will be about £650 million —far larger than the distribution scheme. The only justification for that would be if dairy production were now according to the quota. However, as we heard recently, United Kingdom production has again exceeded the quota to the extent of £19 million. I am sure that if that is the case here, it will be the case elsewhere in the Community.

In any event, as I understand it, there will have to be quota cuts in 1987-88 to the extent of 6·2 per cent. That is made up of the agreed 4 per cent. plus 1·9 per cent. because of the failure of the milk outgoers scheme and a further 0·3 per cent. transferred to Northern Ireland. In

fact, the outgoers scheme was a resounding failure in that the United Kingdom managed to acquire only 11 per cent. of what was required.

The difficulties of adjusting to the ever-changing targets have led to complaints from the National Farmers Union and others. The new national scheme is at the same payment per litre, and only the ability to surrender part of the quota is different from the European scheme. I have to ask whether the Government are confident that that scheme will succeed where the previous scheme failed. If the amended outgoers scheme is as unsuccessful as the last, what will happen? I must reiterate that, while that is going on, farm workers are losing their jobs in the dairy sector in greater numbers than elsewhere in agriculture, as are creamery workers, and there are no special terms for their structural displacement. The Select Committee on Agriculture issued a report in which it made recommendations and focused on that problem. I hope that the Government can tell us today that they have a positive response on that issue.

The Minister mentioned the beef sector. There was an agreement in December, but, as a result of the dairy cuts, increased cow culls — estimated at something over 1 million cows in Europe as a whole—threaten the welfare of the beef sector. We were told that 435 million ecu was available to dispose of the beef, but subsequent events have cast doubt on that matter leading to the Minister's letter last week in which he said—I understand this to be the correct position — that if the beef sector was badly affected he would "press hard" for correction of it. I welcome that statement of intent, but it is not what the farmers were promised. They were promised that it was already budgeted for. I believe that the Minister ought to confirm that it is now in the budget, despite what the Minister of State said about looking carefully through the accounts so that we can spot somewhere a figure attributable to that. We want to know that money, not just good will, has been set aside for the difficulties that will face the beef sector in the near future.

If we are to tackle the expense and the surpluses of the CAP, we have to be willing to have a policy. I believe that the Government simply do not possess one. I have said that we have set out our views. We have set them out with a clarity and candour that will impress everybody, except the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West, who confesses his inability to read documents of that length.

Mr. Jopling: He can reckon.

Mr. John: He may be able to reckon, but he will have to read in order to reckon.

I want to try to find out from the Government what their policy is for that reform. I have heard many vague statements from the Minister this afternoon about pricing being part of the policy. It used to be all the policy, but they have lost confidence in that as a sign of reform in agriculture policy.

Set-aside has been mentioned, but I do not know whether, in the Minister's vocabulary, set-aside is an elastic definition of extensive farming. We have been hearing from the Minister about the Government's set-aside scheme for many months, but I have never heard any of the details. I have never heard how much land is to be set aside, what is intended in Britain and where the land will be. How much cereal land needs to be set aside? What sum per hectare or acre will be paid to the farmers? Will we have a national as well as a Community scheme and, most important, when, O Lord, when will the scheme start? We have heard that the Commission will bring forward proposals when every nation has drawn up its own scheme.

I have been chided by the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) about what happens in the here and now, but we have to start somewhere. Given the rate at which the Commission and the Council of Ministers proceed, they will be endlessly weighing the pros and cons, and will never start a scheme that will lead to a reduction in production. The time for vague expressions of good will is past. Unless the policy is reasonably well formulated at this stage, there will be an unacceptable delay during which further surpluses will pile up before any sort of policy is implemented.

It may be alleged that I have forgotten the alternative land use in the rural economy package. That is not true. I regard ALURE as the most over-rated gimmick that even this Government have attempted to foist upon an unsuspecting public. The whole glossy packet is largely descriptive of what is available in the United Kingdom — plus some pretty pictures. As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, in the case of Scotland most of the pictures are of his constituency — [HON. MEMBERS: "Mostly of his farm."] Even the document "Farming UK" is descriptive, with exception of half a dozen pages at the end. Of all the proposals, only two were not settled and accepted Government policy before the issue of the document. The first was the farm woodland scheme. Even put at its most optimistic, I believe that it would have done little to transform the situation on cereal land, as we thought it would, or on the hills, as the Minister later explained it was designed to do.

At Question Time we pressed the Government on the detailed costing of the £10 million scheme. The Minister has said that £10 million per annum will be available by the third year. But how much of that is new money and how much of it is involved in acreage payments? With the permission of the Minister's private office, I have consulted his Ministry, and I understand that £8 million of the £10 million consists of planning grant already available and administration costs. Of the £10 million, only £2 million represents acreage payments in respect of forestry. If that is so, the sum is miniscule and derisory, and simply does not measure up to the scale of the problem. I want the Minister to answer that point at the end of the debate.

I shall ask again a question that the Government have sedulously avoided answering—whether the removal of MAFF consent to house building on agricultural land will make planning consent easier to obtain. If, as the Secretary of State for the Environment has said, it will not, what is the point of the measure? What is the point of changing the direction of guidance? The point is that it will increase the sprawl of luxury homes in areas where there is already pressure on amenity and agricultural land.

All in all, the Government's position on agriculture is increasingly not so much negative as responsive: "We wait for things to happen so that we can say, 'No. That will affect British interests'." As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian said, one country or another will say no to each of the price proposals. The chance should be seized by the whole Council of Ministers to work positively for

[Mr. John]

the reduction of surplus production and of the expenditure of vast sums to support production that we can neither consume nor store.

The Government by their inaction, have forfeited the confidence of farmers. Their prices policy, particularly as pursued by Lord Cockfield, will offend consumers even more. Above all, it is time that Ministers met genuine concern with action and practical help rather than with overblown rhetoric and adolescent debating.

5.5 pm

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): I have a smile on my face because of the last sentence of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). After all, we have heard much rhetoric and hot air from the Opposition over the years.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak in what, sadly for me, may be my last debate on agriculture. I have had the privilege of speaking in every agriculture debate over the last 23 years, and, my word, I have seen Ministers come and go. I have seen big ones, thin ones, fat ones, and stupid ones, most of whom were on the Opposition Benches. I have certainly seen problems small and large. I remember coming on to the political scene when a Conservative Minister of Agriculture sought to introduce standard quantities. I remember the row that we had in the west country. I could go through year by year stating the problems that British agriculture has had.

I say sincerely to my right hon. Friend that I do not think that any previous Minister had to face problems similar to those with which he has had to deal. The poor man has been squeezed by the Treasury, farmers and Brussels. We have never had surpluses and my right hon. Friend has had an unbelievably difficult task. Although not many people seem to realise it, his efforts have been immense.

As I survey the agricultural scene, I can well understand the concern and annoyance of farmers, given all that they have been asked to do and all that they have done. Over the years they have made fantastic efforts to carry out the wishes of various Ministers of Agriculture. It is heartbreaking for them to have to go into reverse, but reverse, I am afraid it has to be. The only point is that, if we are to go into reverse, it must be done fairly throughout the Community, which it is not the case at the moment. I had hoped that the Opposition would address themselves to that problem in the way that Conservative Members have been doing, with representations not only to the Minister, but to the Prime Minister and others. In going into reverse, we must have parity and fairness throughout the Community, which we do not have at present.

We must be careful not to make matters worse. That is my criticism of the Opposition and of the press, particularly my own paper in the south-west of England, which is all gloom and doom. It never gets the balance right or highlights things that have gone right and are going right for British agriculture. Farmers do not want to hear gloom and doom all the time. There are bright spots. Some farmers are doing reasonably well, and I shall refer to that aspect in a moment, but they need encouragement from the Opposition and the press, and useful suggestions to help them with diversification and better marketing and to obtain a larger share of the home market. All the time the Opposition and the press reveal negative attitudes. It is sickening.

Mr. John: I do not need the hon. Gentleman to tell me at second hand what agriculture wants. I meet members of the National Farmers Union in county and district branches. I hope the hon. Gentleman accepts that, although they may not agree with everything that I say about the matter, they applaud the fact that someone is putting forward some ideas. Agriculture has been afflicted by uncertainty.

Sir Peter Mills: Strange though it may seem, I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman. Agriculture is a business of uncertainty, but that is the problem of being in the farming community. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has to deal with that difficulty all the time.

I am not saying that all is right in agriculture. In my constituency, 14 or 15 per cent. of the population are farmers, and I know only too well what is happening and what my pocket says. There are difficulties, but there are pluses. Any dairy farmer with a reasonable quota knows that he has done quite well under the quota system. The margin over costs has been as good as ever, but we must address our minds to the difficulties as well. Farmers are receiving a better than expected price for grain. That is one off, but it has been helpful during the past year. However, I am not sure that my right hon. Friend is correct about the price proposals. The cereal position this year could be serious, especially if a lot has to be put into intervention. The beef industry is in serious difficulties, and obviously that is a minus. The problem will be made even more difficult by the influx of cow beef on to the market. I hope that special measures will be made while we get rid of the cow beef and that the price of clean beef will not suffer too much.

For some time sheep farmers have been on a good wicket. This year, the new lambs that are coming on in the south-west of England are fetching high prices. I agree with my right hon. Friend that we cannot accept the Community's proposals to limit a flock to 500 ewes. That would be wrong and unfair, but I must warn farmers that, however much they wish to find alternative crops and production, it would be foolish to continue adding more and more ewes to flocks. If farmers do that, they will spoil the market. I understand that the president of the NFU and others are listening to this debate. I hope that they will urge farmers not to overdo it. While travelling the country, I have never seen so many ewes and lambs. That is fine —we want the freedom to increase our export market— but we should not overdo it. We must not spoil the good market.

I should like to refer to the main thrust that the Government should take in Europe. I wholeheartedly support the desire of my right hon. Friend to save agriculture from the complete collapse of agricultural support. I believe that, despite what some people say, there is a real danger. One need only look at the amount of support that British agriculture gets from Europe to see how much we depend upon it. We must take practical steps to limit that expenditure or, I am afraid, the dairy farmer who now relies on £90 a year per cow from public funds will be in difficulty. I hope that the Government's thrust will be to maintain the common agricultural policy. The

CAP must be modified and changed, and expenditure must be cut, but it would be a sad day for British agriculture if it lost the support that it gets from the Community as a whole

The Opposition will not get away with anything from me in perhaps my last speech on agriculture. I go around the country talking to farmers and, with great respect to the hon. Member for Pontypridd, have done so for many more years than he has. One of the most dishonest actions by not only the Socialists but the Liberals and Social Democrats is to put forward to the farmers policies which they say they can introduce. They have not learnt the lesson that it is not just a matter of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food going to Brussels and achieving changes. Twelve Ministers have to decide on a policy.

What is the use of getting up at a farmers' meeting and saying, as the alliance does, "We can do this for you, the small farmers"? The Opposition know that that is dishonest. It is wrong. When the election is held, they must be much more responsible in what they say to farmers, bearing in mind that one must convince not only Community Ministers in Brussels but the Treasury back home. Some of us who have been Ministers know only too well——

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth) *rose*——

Sir Peter Mills: Just a moment. I am in full flight and enjoying it.

Decisions involve not just Ministers in Brussels, but the Treasury. Those who have been Ministers know that it is difficult to convince the Treasury, whether it is Socialist or Conservative, to give the support that one wants. I have lost my train of thought, so I give way to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

Mr. Hardy: I was reluctant to intervene in what is perhaps the hon. Gentleman's valedictory contribution to agriculture debates, but perhaps my intervention will allow him to collect his thoughts so that his flow can continue unabated. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, if the Labour party were in government and were to implement the policies that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) has presented out of his own pocket, that would be a much more responsible contribution than that to which he referred by the alliance? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that if the Conservative party were in opposition at the present time farmers in Britain, encouraged and perhaps joined by many Conservative Members, would probably be marching down Whitehall and demonstrating with tractors around Parliament square, to the jubilation and encouragement of the Conservative party?

Sir Peter Mills: I probably cannot always read as well as I should like, but I can hear and understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. It is no good having Opposition policies that cannot be put into practice in Europe. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the Liberals. They are even more dishonest and disastrous for the farming community. Any farmer who votes for the alliance in the election wants his head seen to. Who wants a two-tier price system? Who wants a land tax? There are enough burdens without that. I know that the alliance has now dropped the agricultural rating idea, but the land tax proposals still exist. A two-tier price system for British agriculture would be disastrous.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I respect the hon. Gentleman enormously. He has made a major contribution to agriculture while he has been a Member, and I wish him the best in his retirement, but today, being his final fling, he is trying to brainwash British agriculture into thinking that farmers are so well off that there is no need for them to worry or look ahead. Can the hon. Gentleman explain why, over the past four years, the net income of Welsh farmers has dropped by 34 per cent. and the net income of United Kingdom farmers has dropped by 21 per cent? Will the hon. Gentleman give that explanation instead of trying to brainwash the public?

Sir Peter Mills: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have certainly never tried to whitewash or brainwash the farmers. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his compliments. I have made it clear that there are serious and difficult problems in agriculture. People are being hurt and incomes have dropped, but there is a balance of good and bad. British agriculture is not helped by gloom and doom. Farmers need encouragement, help and aid in effecting the necessary changes.

I deal next with the green pound. The present position is intolerable and we must do something about it. I suggest that it must be at least 12 per cent. to get the right measure of balance. We cannot continue to allow German and Irish beef to come into this country and destroy our fine meat industry, let alone our meat plants. I beg my right hon. Friend to get down to business in Brussels and see that we get at least 12 per cent. I do not want to see any of the other countries leapfrogging ahead, because if they do we will need more than 12 per cent.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): If this speech by my good friend and neighbour, the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) is to be his last, it is one that I shall regret hearing on that ground alone. He has always been a fount of information. Many of us who seek not to retire might have to learn more about agriculture when his shadow is not cast across the west country. I take his point about 12 per cent., although 15 per cent. might be a nicer figure. Does he agree that we should avoid this problem by joining the European monetary system?

Sir Peter Mills: No. Much as I like and admire and wish to help my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller), I cannot assist him on his last point. I agree that the European green pound is the key to many of our problems, not only in beef, but in cereals and other commodities. I wish the Minister well as he battles for that in Brussels. I hope he will not forget that aid needs to be increased for the suckler cow herd. In three or four years, when the cows have been slaughtered from the dairy herd, there may be a shortage of beef. We therefore must encourage the suckler herd at present.

I close by quoting from a letter that my right hon. Friend wrote to many of us on this side of the House, which highlights that mood:

"I could say much more but, in summary, I recognise these are hard times for farming. A cut-back is not pleasant or easy to accept. The answer lies not in wooly schemes nor open hostility by some parties but in realistic and fair policies such as devaluation of the Green Pound, increase in suckler cow subsidy and "set aside" with, of course, price restraint.

There must be market discipline within the framework of CAP but there are also new opportunities in our food markets and diversifying activities. The future can be better and it must be better if we work towards these aims."

I say amen to that.

5.24 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I believe that it is almost unprecedented for the Minister to postpone the annual debate on the price proposals of the European Commission until after the negotiations have begun. I suspect that the Minister intended, by this extraordinary delay, to avoid having to come to the House and openly admit to the emptiness of his strategy for agriculture. By this device he may have hoped to elicit some understanding that, being in the middle of negotiations, he would not have to reveal his negotiating objectives and consequently be taken to task for the misdirection of agricultural policy by this Government for which he has been responsible.

The Minister has, however, held this pivotal office for almost four years. His helmsmanship, therefore, has to be judged not merely by his technical appraisal of the proposals on the table in Brussels today but by his record of steering the industry, apparently without the use of navigational aids, dangerously close to the rocks.

His inheritance was a buoyant and innovatory industry with confidence to invest in its future. Our recent membership of the European Community was seen as providing the opportunity to boost domestic production of food to meet out needs and to enter new foreign markets. The Minister's legacy is an agriculture industry that is deeply in debt, with more than twice the indebtedness that he inherited, with a sharply falling trend in real incomes, and fearful of the future.

The most notable omission from the Minister's speech this afternoon was any reference to farm incomes. He gave no impression that farm incomes would play any part whatever in his determinations in the negotiations that he is embarking upon again next week. The consequences of his mismanagement are felt not only by the rural economy — although agriculture, after North sea oil, is our largest primary industry; related agribusinesses, many located in towns with high unemployment, are also suffering under the Minister's lash.

Only last week Massey Ferguson in Coventry had to declare about 900 redundancies. Throughout the country agricultural contractors, distributors and suppliers are cutting back as farming spending is sharply reduced—last year by 18 per cent. on building and works and 10 per cent. on plant, machinery and vehicles. The alliance parties fully recognise the need—on which the Minister lingered —for new directions in the management of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the leader of the SDP, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), made a speech on 6 January which was described by the president of the National Farmers Union as setting out a policy that would annihilate United Kingdom farming, and a few days later said that it would "rip us apart"? Against that background, how can the hon. Member sustain the nonsense that he has just spoken?

Mr. Maclennan: I intend to deal with the policies of the alliance parties. It was probably foolish of me to give way to the hon. Member.

The Minister of Agriculture, unique in the history of his Department, has been subjected to a motion of no confidence by the National Farmers Union. I have gone through the entire history of this Department, which was started by a former Member of Parliament from my constituency, Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, who was the president of the Board of Agriculture back in the 18th century. I do not believe there has been a more unpopular Minister than the present one, or with greater justification.

I was speaking of the success of our farmers in increasing output by introducing new techniques and breeds, coupled with worldwide development of indigenous farming to supply local markets, and suggesting that this had challenged the assumptions of the architects of the common agricultural policy.

It is ironic that only yesterday was announced the Queen's award for industry to the Plant Breeding Institute in Cambridge for the production and development of Avalon and Mercia strains of wheat. But these very successes are contributing to the strains that the market feels and that farmers must face. It is our criticism of the Government and of the Minister that there is no British stamp upon the thinking of the European Community about how to tackle these problems. Rather, the Minister reacts to the muscle of others, sometimes with total unpreparedness—as, for example, in 1984 when the milk quota schemes were introduced. The Minister's usual reaction is flabby ineffectualness. That was demonstrated last summer with the introduction of the cereal co-responsibility levy arrangements.

The right hon. Gentleman likes to portray himself, as he did this afternoon, as the voice of sanity stoutly defending economic reason and British farming interests. The reality is different. His discredited policy of across-the-board price restraint has systematically alienated all his European ministerial colleagues. It has not deflected the Council of Ministers from damaging and discriminatory ad hoc measures to curb production, such as the package which the right hon. Gentleman brought forward in December, which had such a grave impact on the beef sector. Every time it is the British farmer who loses out under the right hon. Gentleman's stewardship.

Of all the countries in the European Community, the United Kingdom has suffered the largest real fall in farming income since the Government came to office. The alliance recognises the need to change support measures, but it is too much to ask of it and of the country to accept that British farmers must bear the brunt of the changes. Article 39 of the treaty of Rome sets out as the first objective of the common agricultural policy the requirement that it should achieve a fair standard of living for farmers, but that is no longer being secured and there is no evidence that the Minister regards it as a factor to be given weight in the annual price negotiations.

The alliance proposes that the Community should work towards a new price support system for commodities in surplus or close to surplus. The Minister knows and the industry knows that it is the open-endedness of the present system which has caused budgetary problems. Across-the-board price restraint acts as a positive incentive to produce the last bushel of corn from the last hectare of land. Instead, the alliance is proposing a two-tier price system. This would provide that the Community should limit the right to support to the quantities required to meet demand. I noticed that the Minister, when he was referring to the principles being advanced by the Commission, almost with sleight of hand mentioned that as the third principle to which he gave his support. Let him not come before the House and country again and pretend that what the

alliance is proposing is unique or uniquely damaging to Britain's interest, when he, by his own words this afternoon, gave the principle his support.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman is proceeding in his usual stumbling way and I am not clear to what part of my speech he is referring. I guess that he might be referring to the part of it where I referred to guaranteed thresholds. There is a great difference between that policy and the disastrous one that the leader of his party, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), and of the alliance is proposing. His party's proposal discriminates against some farmers and not others, and principally farmers in the United Kingdom, and the guaranteed threshold arrangement operates on all farmers equally. Surely the guaranteed threshold system is a good one for that reason, just as the policy of the right hon. Member for Devonport is a wholly bad one.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister can draw a distinction only by misrepresenting the nature and detail of the proposals that the alliance is advocating. He and his sidekick, the Minister of State, have attempted consistently to mislead the farming community on this issue. No doubt we shall have the opportunity of hearing the Minister of State doing that again when he replies. The right hon. Gentleman is a specialist in misrepresentation.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No, I will not. The right hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to reply to the debate.

Mr. Gummer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No, I will not.

Mr. Gummer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not the custom of the House that when an hon. Member attacks another Member personally he gives way if the Member whom he has attacked wishes to intervene?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It is customary to give way if the hon. Member who is referred to wishes to intervene, but that is entirely a matter for the hon. Member who has the Floor.

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Maclennan: I will not give way.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the word "sidekick" a parliamentary expression? The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) described my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as a sidekick and I should like to know whether that is a parliamentary expression.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It might be an inelegant word, but it is one that I have heard in the House many times before.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister of State has refused to give way to me on three previous occasions when he has replied to debates on agriculture which I have initiated or in which I have intervened. I have no intention, therefore, of giving way to him this afternoon at any stage in the debate.

The two-tier pricing system that the alliance is advancing would ensure that each member country was allotted a share in the total quantum of support that is related fairly to its farmers' contribution to the Community's production needs. It would then be for each member country to distribute that support among its own producers in a manner that ensured that the different structural circumstances of farming in each member country were taken into account.

In Britain, for example, 11 per cent. of the cereal growers produce 51 per cent. of cereal output. It is not reasonable that the support system should support the entire output of that 11 per cent. It is reasonable that the broadest backs should bear a fair share of the burden of scaling down surplus production.

Mr. Jopling: The policy has been changed again.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister says that, but he has been seeking consistently to misrepresent the alliance's policy and I am going to get it on the record so that he cannot do so again.

As I have said, it is reasonable that the broadest backs should bear a fair share of the burden of scaling down surplus production. The few large-scale producers — I have no doubt that they are highly efficient—would not be penalised by a super-levy, unlike the large-scale dairy producers under the Government's arrangements, on the proportion of their output that was unsupported. They could compete without support to dispose of that surplus in the market place.

What is the Government's alternative? They say that they support a set-aside scheme, but I share the scepticism expressed by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), the Labour party's spokesman, about that. There is little evidence in the Commission's proposals that the Government's thinking has found any favour, and certainly not on a scale that would make the slightest impact on surpluses within the Community. There is even less evidence that any Chancellor of the Exchequer would for long be prepared to countenance a system which paid farmers both to produce and not to produce. I know how the Minister has failed to obtain from the present Chancellor of the Exchequer the resources needed to sustain the industry, but I understand that to ask him to do that would be to ask the impossible. It appears that the Minister's ideas on set-aside have been stillborn.

What are the Commission's proposals? Many of them seem unwise and damaging to British interests both in conception and in detail. The proposal to retain the co-responsibility levy on cereals and to extend the principle in respect of A and B sugar is misguided. The restriction on intervention for cereals for a period between February and May will damage market stability but not curb output. The proposal to eliminate salted butter intervention would be especially hostile to British interests. The Minister has the support of the House in opposing those proposals.

Another proposal that is discriminatory against Britain is the proposed reduction of support for single zero rape. Likewise, the Minister's opposition to the proposed restrictions on the payment of the annual ewe premium to the first 500 ewes, or to 1,000 in less favoured areas, enjoys the support of the House.

Among the other nonsenses which the right hon. Gentleman is right to seek to stop is the so-called oils and fat stabilisation measures. As this has been adequately dealt with, I need not say more than that the alliance fully supports him on that point.

[Mr. Maclennan]

What has to be asked, and what I think the Minister might address himself to in replying to the debate, is how it is that so many measures patently discriminatory against British interests reach the negotiating table. Is it another example of how little weight the Minister carries in Brussels that time and again proposals against which he has set his face reappear?

One of the most worrying effects of the Government's makeshift approach to surplus production is the knock-on effect of measures taken to deal with one problem upon the production of other commodities. In the debate which the alliance initiated in this House on 24 March on the crisis in the beef industry we pointed to the damage which the Minister had done both to the beef industry and to milk by the further quota restrictions, recently increased by a further 6 per cent., with the consequential cow cullings in January and February up by 27 per cent., without making additional funds available for storage and export aids.

We have heard nothing today from the Minister about the additional resources which he intimated earlier, misleadingly, were available, beyond the fact that he intends to keep an eye on the market. One scarcely looks for less from a Minister of Agriculture, but it will not offer much comfort to the industry. The problem remains acute and he has done nothing about it. So also does the need to tackle the gross distortion caused by the unfair advantage enjoyed by Irish beef producers in our markets. They seem consistently to get a better deal from their Minister.

There is a further risk of a damaging knock-on effect flowing from the proposal sharply to cut our cereal price support, which is of particular concern to those raising store livestock in the hills and uplands. It is possible that cereal growers will tend to switch to sheep breeding on the low ground — a tendency already discernible and to which the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) referred. The Government must seek to safeguard the hills and uplands by securing increased headage payments and possibly taking direct measures of a quantitatively restrictive kind to ensure that this danger for those who have no option to switch to other forms of production is avoided. I must also reiterate the alliance view that the clawback arrangements on the export of livestock, particularly in the light of the new European premium scheme, are discriminatory and should be terminated.

On milk, the impact of the December package will be severe and will be exacerbated by the February proposals for butter and retention of the co-responsibility levy. It is time for the Government to recognise how badly disadvantaged were British producers by their acquiescence in the choice of the base year 1981 to determine national quotas. During the years for which the Minister has had responsibility, United Kingdom milk production will have fallen by nearly 15 per cent., and it now stands at a mere 80 per cent. of our own market requirements. That is scarcely a triumph of negotiating skill.

Nor have the moves with which the Minister has agreed done anything to secure the objective of the Community to produce commodities in areas most suited to their production. Individual dairy farmers should receive improved compensation for quota cuts by a topping up of the payment by 1·6p per litre to the maximum permitted amount for the current year; and those who lose their jobs in the industry should receive appropriate redundancy payments with Community finance. The further 1 per cent. cut in reduction required of milk producers should be secured by an improved and more generous outgoers' scheme to ensure that the cut is voluntarily achieved. Dairy farmers have been appalled by the Minister's supine acceptance of the Commission's proposals to limit the leasing of milk quota. It is his duty to secure a transfer scheme which is flexible and fair to all producers, tenants and owner-occupiers alike.

In reviewing the Commission's price proposals, I have left to the last the single most important requirement of the Minister, and that is to secure devaluation of the green pound of certainly not less than three times that proposed by the European Commission. His tactics on this have been peculiar, to say the least. His Parliamentary Secretary, who has not been present during the debate today—*[Interruption.]* I am delighted that he is here. I beg the hon. Member's pardon; I mistook him for the Chief Whip.

I hope that the hon. Member, in his speech in Exeter on 12 March, let the cat out of the bag when he said that a 16 per cent. devaluation of the green pound was of the order that the Government were seeking. Certainly it would not be out of line with what is required. The current tax on exports and and subsidies on imports of around 20 per cent. are deeply damaging to British agriculture and a discrimination against British farmers which is simply intolerable.

This debate, unusually, has linked the price-fixing proposals to wider issues of domestic agriculture policy, some of them raised by the spate of glossy brochures produced by the Government a short time ago, collectively known by the mistaken title of "ALURE". Unfortunately, viewed in the round, those proposals are tantalisingly insubstantial. They are based upon the sensible acknowledgment that traditional agriculture requires less land to produce the food we need. This perception, however, is not translated into practical policies which will have any material impact upon the rural scene. Their announcement was accompanied by the issuance of a maladroit circular——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: I am sorry. I have taken rather longer than I intended because of the number of occasions on which I have already given way and I hope that the hon. Member will forgive me if I do not give way again.

The Government issued a maldroit circular from the Department of the Environment withdrawing the previous presumption against the development of grade 3 agricultural land, which, however, offered no Government guidance for land use in the countryside. The belief in a market free-for-all in land fostered by the Secretary of State for the Environment lies uneasily with the Minister's own expressed concern to assist diversification of agricultural enterprises. It is particularly alarming to tenant farmers who may, as a result of the grant of planning permission for industrial use, find themselves served by the landowner with an incontestable notice to quit. This muddled measure will neither protect the environment nor assist the farming industry, and the document should be withdrawn for further consideration.

The best way to measure the ALURE proposals is to observe the modest commitment of resources which the

Minister has promised: some £25 million per annum drawn from his existing agricultural budget. That should be set against the sharp reduction in expenditure, actual and planned, on structural measures for agriculture which the Minister has already effected. Since he took office in 1983 the total annual expenditure on structural measures of his own Department—and I leave out of account the parallel measures in Scotland—has been cut from £147 million per annum to £77 million per annum, a cut of 47 per cent.

Indeed, almost the only ripple of interest which the Minister's new proposals have stimulated has been in respect of the proposed farm woodland scheme. The alliance welcomes the expressed aim of the scheme to divert land from agricultural production to enhance the landscape, to support farm income and rural employment and to encourage greater interest in timber production from farms. But the Minister's own targets for trees have not been met. In 1980 we had a target of 30,000 hectares per annum; now we actually have 23,000 hectares per annum; and there is no money coming forward to suggest that even the old target will be met, never mind the new target of 33,000.

Unfortunately, the basis for annual payments under the scheme suggested is entirely wrong, particularly in its treatment of land other than that categorised as especially disadvantaged or advantaged, with apparently little regard being paid to the amount of profit being forgone by farmers. Equally, the rate of annual payment seems wholly unattractive in that the range of payments proposed is between £125 and £30 per hectare per annum. That is the sort of money that is being offered to farmers in environmentally sensitive areas to continue their own present practices.

Whatever system the Government propose to adopt, the savings in agricultural support payments that would flow from an extensive woodland scheme of that kind which cut the cost of storage and disposal of surpluses would allow significantly higher payments to be made to growers, and that should be considered. As the proposals stand, they will make little, if any, impact on the elimination of surpluses and will certainly have no impact unless the scheme is directed towards the afforestation of some of the more productive land.

I must make one Scottish point. Under the terms of the published proposals, crofters would be wholly excluded from the scheme because trees planted on tenanted land, including trees planted on crofts and crofter common grazings, belong to the landlord and not to the tenant.

The ALURE scheme is ill thought out. It is simply a bit of dressing to seek to divert attention from the emptiness of the Government's policy for land use and development of the rural economy, and from the damage that the Minister has consistently wrought throughout his tenure of office. His speech today showed that he has not taken the measure of the crisis that is facing the industry, over whose burdens he presides.

The leader in the April edition of the official journal of the National Farmers Union of Scotland referred to the farm industry's "battle for survival". The Minister appeared to be scarcely aware that a battle was going on, never mind engaging himself, as the leader of the industry, in seeking to ensure that that battle is won. Farming need not wait too long. It is clear that an election is now in the offing, and the alliance is ready and prepared to take up the challenge.

5.51 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) must have got out of bed on the wrong side this morning. Even when he seemed able to support what the Government are doing, he seemed unable to do so with any grace. That is uncharacteristic of him and I am sorry to have heard it.

However, I heard a little more about the alliance's two-tier policy that seems to be in existence, even if in a somewhat changed form. No doubt there is one tier for the Liberals and one for the SDP.

I want to say a few things about the EEC proposals. It is not trivial to say that if I drop them on your toes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would be right to complain. Cannot the EEC, or whoever is responsible for producing the English translation, produce the proposals in a form that we can more readily assimilate? The proposals form a considerable bundle and are extremely difficult to interpret.

I should like to express my support for all that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has done in the negotiations. He is aiming at the right objectives and trying to achieve the targets that we all wish to achieve, although he cannot expect, and does not always receive, the success that he should. The churlishness expressed by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland will neither encourage our agriculture nor help my right hon. Friend to get a better deal in Europe. I hope that he will continue his strong approach to obtaining a green pound devaluation such as has been mentioned, and for which there is unanimous support. I hope also that he will try to do more to obtain the leasing of quotas, which I understand his Ministry has rejected and has informed the Milk Marketing Board that the EEC cannot support it. However, it has some potential use and I hope that he will continue to explore it in his negotiations.

I should like to make two general points about agriculture. The first relates to selling. For many years producers have produced, but not many of them in agriculture have had to sell their products. Extraordinarily, by comparison with other industries, fewer of those engaged in agriculture have exercised any influence over their own market place. Perhaps that is why those who produce and sell have not been seen as part of one process. The CAP has encouraged over-production, partly because of the divorce of production from selling.

The Food from Britain campaign is a small start, but as yet it has not made nearly enough impact. I should like to draw two examples to the attention of my right hon. Friend. The first is the sale of 76,000 tonnes of New Zealand butter. As the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) has stated, New Zealand has no right to sell that butter. I am glad to see my right hon. Friend in his place but sorry to see that he is injured. I trust that it did not happen in any negotiations. I suspect that it was probably in one of the debates of the General Synod. We must do everything that we can to stop him enjoying any laughter, or he may do himself more injury. He made the point that New Zealand exporters have no right to sell butter here; they have an opportunity to do so, but no one is obliged to buy. However, they do.

Paragraph 15 of the report that has just been produced by the Agriculture Select Committee states that the United

[Mr. Nicholas Baker]

Kingdom dairy trade would serve our farmers better if it learnt to market its products as well as the Dutch, Danish or New Zealand exporters.

The second example of salesmanship that I wish to draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend is the sale of meat in the United Kingdom. During the past 20 years, although the overall consumption of meat has stood still in the United Kingdom, in the EEC as a whole meat consumption has increased by 37 per cent. At the same time, in the United Kingdom there has been a threefold increase in the consumption of poultry and a 13 per cent. decline in the consumption of other meats on a per capita basis.

Therefore, I suggest that a good job is not being done in the promotion and sale of meat in the United Kingdom. I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that poultry, which is clearly being successfully promoted, is handled by private companies, whereas beef, lamb and pigmeat promotion is handled by the Meat and Livestock Commission. The MLC is not accountable to its producers, and a number of producers are not satisfied with its performance. I have no doubt that it needs more time to achieve more, and I also have no doubt that its resources are limited.

Two points must be addressed right now. First, the case must be made for meat as against other foods. It is extraordinary that people can sell sweets and confectionery in Britain, which must, on health grounds, compare unfavourably with meat, and that they can get away with selling those goods as though they were somehow healthy or good for us. Secondly, we must consider splitting up the activities of the Meat and Livestock Commission so that pig producers especially can more closely control the promotion of pigmeat. Other sectors of the meat industry could do the same.

My second general point relates to timber and to the case for an extended forestry industry. Sometimes the environmentalists, of whom I count myself one, seem to forget that the ancient woodlands that we wish to preserve once covered most of Britain. Undoubtedly, our lower-lying land could take more trees, and the need for diversification by farmers can encourage the creation of new woodlands. The Government are right to encourage that in the face of the EEC surpluses.

The conservation aspects can be respected, but there must be a balance. The owner of one estate in my constituency is fond of telling me the story of a piece of ground that he took members of one august and respected conservation body to see 20 years ago when it was an arable field. He said, "You will be pleased to know that I am going to plant trees in this field because they will improve the look of the countryside. I am going into the timber industry." They replied, "You must not do that. If you do, it will spoil the look of the down, the lie of the countryside will be affected injuriously and it will not look so pretty." Nevertheless, he went ahead; and 20 years later he took another group from the same body devoted to rural England, of which I am a member, and said, "This wood has been planted for 20 years. You will be pleased to know that I propose to cut it down and restore the land to arable farming." He expected a chorus of huzzas, but they said, "You must not do that. If you do, you will destroy the way the landscape folds and the beautiful scenery. We hope you will not do that." Naturally he did, and the land is now in its former state.

Well designed and managed forestry enhances conservation, not the reverse. We have too many unthinned plantations which are fit only for pulp and we have old-fashioned block plantations which will remain for many years as a reproach to our post-war foresters. The Forestry Commission has not always set the best example in caring for its woods, perhaps for short-term, financial, Government-imposed reasons.

Forestry is a long business. In the United Kingdom the accent should be on first-class timber production, not on the production of wood for pulp. That inevitably means an emphasis on softwood timber. We cannot afford to overdo hardwoods for environmental reasons. Properly spaced trees and a good mix of hard and softwoods, by which I mean up to 75 per cent. of softwoods, which is certainly more than is set out in the consultative document, coupled with sensible thinning policies, can produce a good ecological background, bluebells galore and a viable business.

I welcome the farm woodland scheme and shall comment on it, albeit two days after the end of the consultative period. I favour the first basis for the annual payment as it is administratively simpler and fairer nationally. I do not believe that an annual payment of £125 per hectare will encourage farmers to make what is for many of them a radical change of business, even if they understand, which not many of them do, that that sum is on top of existing grants. The minimum 3 hectare area per holding should be lowered and the 1 hectare per individual block of woodland should also be reduced. The proportion of broadleaves proposed could be reduced to 25 per cent. in lowland areas.

It is essential that good advice is available for farmers if they are to make the change that the Government are trying to encourage them to make. Clearly, the Forestry Commission is the body to monitor the schemes and the conditions imposed. If necessary, assistance in the form of advice should be provided as part of the scheme. I hope that sporting and leisure uses of woodland, which are important and greatly under-appreciated in towns and certainly in this House, will also be encouraged.

I welcome the woodland scheme and the initiatives that my right hon. Friend the Minister is taking to lead our farmers to make changes which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) eloquently said, must be made if in future we are to have a viable, strong agriculture.

6.4 pm

Miss Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside): British agriculture faces its present problems because of our membership of the Common Market. The interests of the British people, including farmers, have been sold to unaccountable, predatory multinationals.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) has left the Chamber. He accused the Labour party of making promises that we could not deliver. That is because, as he rightly pointed out, we are only one country out of 12 in the Common Market. That, indeed, is the nub of the problem. We are no longer in control of our agriculture.

When the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was a member of the Labour party, he

defied a three-line Whip and voted to join the Common Market, and now he complains of the problems that we face as a result. It is a little late in the day for that.

We all know that the EEC is hugely expensive. In practice, enslavement to the free market dogma has meant enslavement to multinationals and anarchy in food production. The result has been huge piles of unused food that must be stored. Half the entire EEC budget goes on the storage and disposal of unused food. Recently, the Minister told the National Farmers Union that the EEC now faced a prospective overspend of £2,500 million, almost entirely because of the CAP. Those mountains of food are obscene while people in the Third world go hungry and while the price of food here is too high and many British people do not have an adequate diet. Butter and cheese were easily given away to our pensioners because they needed it.

Despite producing more grain than is used, United Kingdom agriculture is in the ludicrous position of not producing enough food even for the British population. It is 60 per cent. sufficient in total and 80 per cent. sufficient in indigenous-type products. The Minister kept referring to the surpluses in the Community, and I agree with him that we are not producing the surpluses. As I have just pointed out, we are not even self-sufficient. In 1985 we imported food worth £9,762 million. Half our lamb and a third of our bacon came from the other side of the globe, and masses of vegetables and even potatoes were imported. All those imports represent lost British jobs.

Meanwhile, the multinationals have gained immense power, supplying seeds, chemicals, machinery and fertilisers and processing final products. They are increasingly able to dictate terms, and farmers and farm workers are completely surrounded by them. With land ownership speculation and machinery contracting business growing, how much longer will it be before all farmers and farm workers become direct wage labourers for Shell and ICI?

I would describe the Government's proposals, which have been called ALURE, as luring farmers to the death of agriculture. The Tories have made a mess of agriculture, and they know it, and the farmers know it. This represents the end of the consensus of previous Governments of supporting capitalist agriculture through training, tax concessions, subsidies, advice and research and development. The Government have used the lie of surpluses to slash support. I do not accept that British agriculture is in surplus. Our advisory services have been cut by 41 per cent. this year. I believe that the sale of the Plant Breeding Institute and of the National Seeds Development Organisation is imminent, despite the fact that last year the NSEO made a profit of more than £4 million. The Welsh Plant Breeding Station has been devastated. These functions do not disappear, and I believe that ICI is most likely to buy the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Seeds Development Organisation as a package. Who else supplies advice? It is provided by ICI, Shell and others. Did I hear someone say "unbiased"? Never. One way or another, these institutions can distort agriculture.

Workers in research and development realise that their independence is being destroyed for the sake of the multinationals, and they quite rightly condemn the sell-off. However, the crucial point is that the farmers are aware of that as well. That must be the central weakness for the Government. The farmers censured the Minister because they recognised that they had been knifed in the back. They want their independent advice, training and other support services to continue to be free, and I agree with that. Because of record farm debts many small farmers will go out of business, but the multinationals are making record profits.

Farm workers continue to exist on low pay, with 12,000 receiving family income supplement. This means that their wages are below the poverty line despite the fact that 21 per cent. of farmers who employ labour are still doing very well. The low pay of farm workers represents a subsidy to agriculture and food production, on the backs of farm workers.

In 1985 there were 157,000 full-time farm workers, according to Ministry of Agriculture figures. They received £40 a week less than the average earnings of industrial workers for a longer working week. If we multiply that £40 a week by 52 weeks for the 157,000 farm workers, the total is £326 million. That is the measure of exploitation of farm workers. The figure also represents the level of subsidy to the industry that their low earnings reflects. I am referring only to permanent full-time workers. If that sum of money was injected into the rural economy via farm worker's pay packets, what a difference that would make to improving the standards of the community in rural areas, not to mention the great importance that that would have by improving the standard of living of farm workers and their families, which, on the basis of their first-rate production record, they so richly deserve.

Working conditions and safety are as vital to farm workers as they are to other workers, but those factors have been very much eroded under this Government. Allowing for the fact that there are fewer farm workers now than in 1979, the accident rate in the industry has become worse. When it comes to fatal accidents, only the construction industry is more dangerous than agriculture. The figure in that respect were confirmed by one of Her Majesty's inspectors this morning on the radio.

I want to consider the environment, which is something in which I am very interested. I believe that capitalism places no value on the environment. The environment is there only for exploitation. Current legislation is much too weak to protect our environment. Masses of natural land, habitats and environment have already been destroyed. Chemicals pollute our environment, and of course Shell and ICI are primarily chemical companies. Will they develop new varieties of crops to reduce chemical use? Of course not. They are very aware of the green lobby, and one reason why they buy up seed companies and breeding interests is to oppose any move away from chemicals. Selling off the major state plant breeding interest means that there will be no alternative.

Taking land out of production will increase the intensity of production on the remaining land. The United States' experience demonstrates that. That means that more fertilisers will be used. There will be more soil erosion and more damage to wild life, including birds. All sites of special scientific interest should be controlled by the Nature Conservancy Council as a minumum requirement.

As a Socialist, I want land to be publicly owned. I believe that that is the only safe way to protect sites of special scientific interest. Only when land is publicly owned will we give the right weight to environmental concerns and less to making profits. Removing planning controls from grade 3 land—and perhaps grade 2 land—would put more pressure on SSSIs. That would give

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private owners of land a great opportunity to speculate and make profit on land. In the process, I believe that that would seriously damage our beautiful rural areas. Only through the public ownership of land can we look after land properly, stop exploiting it, and protect the environment and the great beauty of our rural areas.

I believe that we must move as quickly as possible to low-intensity farming, because that would be more labour-intensive and would create jobs which we so urgently need in rural areas and elsewhere. It would also be more environmentally sound. We must now begin to phase out chemical farming by beginning to use pesticides that are more selective and do not have such a blanket cover. Many of the insects that are killed are not only harmless, but very useful. In most cases farm woodland schemes—which I welcome—will not endanger SSSIs. However, there will be occasions when sites will need protection from such schemes. The racket in private forestry must be stopped. It is damaging our environment and means that rich people are using forestry to rake in public money and avoid paying tax.

Land is our most important asset, next to people. It provides our food through the labour of our people. We must think in terms of better, more nutritious and cheaper food which we could, in many cases, buy on the world market if we were not in the Common Market. However, we do not want cheaper food at the expense of our agriculture, which we must still support so that in future farm workers, as well as farmers and the rural community as a whole, will have a good standard of living, without damaging our environment and heritage.

The land is honest. It will return to us what we put into it. We must stop exploiting it. Exploitation will stop only when land is publicly owned and used for the benefit of the majority, not for the profit of a few.

6.18 pm

Mr. John Corrie (Cunninghame, North): Although I cannot accept much of what the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) said, it is only fair to pay tribute to her enormous work in the House in championing the cause of farm workers in the years that she has been a Member of Parliament. I understand that she is to retire from the House at the next election. We wish her all the very best in whatever she does after the election.

It would probably only be fair of me to declare an interest in this debate as I am a farmer in the south-west of Scotland. It is a wet and cold area. I was also unfortunately one of those caught by the quotas in 1983 having spent a great deal of money investing in the dairy industry and then receiving a very small quota. I understand the traumas suffered by many farmers in Britain over the past few years. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) said that as he drove through the countryside he could see that sheep numbers were increasing. The great problem is where to go if one gives up dairying. In many cases, it is into sheep farming.

I listened to all that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said and I thank him for all the help that agriculture has had over the past few years. He has the support of the Scottish National Farmers Union. Listening to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), I began to think that I lived in a different country. My right hon. Friend has done much over the past few years to try to find some balance in the difficult situation caused by the horrendous costs of the CAP and trying to keep agriculture alive. That is the problem that he faces in Europe because the price proposals reflect the problems of that great expenditure and the need to control it, while at the same time ensuring that we have a viable industry and that the leak is plugged in the agricultural decline.

All Europe is suffering from the problem of surpluses. It has already been said that we must have equality for all in solving the problems. If we start down the roads of national aids or green pound disadvantages, there will be distortions and unfairnesses which, at the end of the day, will help nobody and we shall become more and more nationalistic in our outlook and less and less European.

I do not want to sound all doom and gloom, but, if we are honest, we must admit that we have an industry which is over-borrowed and over-capitalised. In the old days, it was simple: one bought one's way out of that problem by increasing production to pay for increased costs. With the quota systems that we have now and the present state of agriculture, that is no longer possible. The real problem nowadays is to keep agriculture viable, and the acreages of viable units is going up and up.

My right hon. Friend may say that signs are not as bad as I make out, but one must look carefully at the indicators, certainly in the south-west of Scotland. Bank lending is quietly creeping up in agriculture and, sadly, land values are creeping down, putting enormous pressure on farmers. Over the past two years, there has been little capital investment because there have simply not been the profits to reinvest.

The crisis is just below the surface. My right hon. Friend's real task is, with the other 11 Ministers, to try to solve the problem of our horrendous expenditure while at the same time keeping our agriculture viable. Scottish farmers accept that the Community must sort that out because no national Government can do it on their own.

The real problem is that when a large industry goes into liquidation it hits the headlines and one reads about it, but farms are different. There is no major upheaval. The farm simply goes into liquidation. There is a quiet farm sale and yet another dispersal sale has come and gone. Who are buying the farms that come up for sale? In the west of Scotland it is the Irish. They are buying three good acres for every one that they sell in Ireland or 10 poor acres for every good acre that they sell in Ireland. They are doing very nicely thank you because of the green pound distortion that has been mentioned so often in the Chamber today. We really must have the major change that everybody has been suggesting. We must have a major adjustment to correct the distortion. Moreover, many Irish farmers have quotas that are not nearly so severe as in the rest of Britain and many are still expanding.

Another indicator in south-west Scotland over the past three or four summers is summer grass lets. Many farmers who went out of stock rearing because of quotas thought that that was one way of obtaining an income without increasing the glut in other sectors. Four years ago we had an average price of £130 an acre. Last year that was down to £80 an acre and at the end of last week it was down to £60 an acre. There are two reasons for that. The first is that too many farmers are letting their fields rather than stocking them themselves. The second is the loss of confidence in the future by cattle dealers who are waiting

to see what will happen to the green pound. They will not take on grass lets until they see that they have a reasonable chance of competing on equal terms in beef with other nations.

The EEC negotiations are vital not just for agriculture, but for the rural economy because rural life depends on strong agriculture. Engineers, blacksmiths, stock-dealers, feed-merchants and the village shop, school and post office depend on strong agriculture. If agriculture declines, the rural economy will decline with it. That is why we welcome the Government's proposals and what they are trying to do towards setting up a rural policy.

The tragedy is that common sense does not prevail in other EEC countries. They are blind to the reality of the mountains of excess food in store and the horrendous costs of storing them. If only a percentage of what it is costing to store those foods could be put into the sharp end of agriculture, many of the problems simply would not be there. Agriculture in other EEC countries has the political clout. They have the vital agricultural vote of 27 or 30 per cent. compared with 3 or 4 per cent. in Britain and their farmers say no cuts in any circumstances.

If we could only cut the amount of food in store—much of what is there could even be dumped to cut expenditure—the money that was saved could be put back into agriculture and we could quickly sort out some of the problems. The only answer is not to produce the excess in the first place, even if that means social subsidies on many of our farms.

The proposals before us are right, despite their toughness, and the industry accepts the position that we have now reached. Unless we have some guidance on the required production and safety margin, and then work within those quotas, we shall see one sector after another hit by a crisis as farmers leap from one sector to another. Outgoing diary farmers will go to beef, sheep, or cereals if possible. That will only put more and more pressure on those sectors.

As others have said, I hope that we are not seeing sheep quotas by the back door. The EEC suggestion that we should have a sheep premium only on the first 500 lowland flocks or 1,000 in the less favoured areas would be disastrous in Scotland. How many farms would such proposals affect in the other 11 EEC nations? They would certainly have a dramatic effect in the United Kingdom.

I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Minister of State replies he will comment on a letter that I received today from a farmer who said:

"a more sensible approach would surely be to base Premium payments on the number of sheep per holding related to Standard Man Hours."

We must protect the sheep sector, or it will suffer what has already happened to the dairy sector.

I want to put two specific points to my right hon. Friend. First, there are a number of islands on the west coast of Scotland with a dairy industry and they are extremely close to becoming unviable because quotas are limiting the amount of milk that they can produce for the dairy factories on the islands. I sincerely hope that some specific help can be given to such areas if the quotas of farmers on those islands reaches the point where the dairy was no longer viable.

Secondly, when can we hope to see some harmonisation of veterinary standards in the Community? There are five health tests before cattle can be exported to Europe—brucellosis, TB, official brucellosis-free, enzootic bovine lencosis and infectious bovine rhinotracheitis. Cattle can be well inside the British standard limits yet fail the European tests, denying export to mainland Europe of our stud cattle. Yet our tests let in animals from Europe. I have the feeling that that is more for political than for health reasons. That is denying farmers an export potential in stud stock as an extra source of income in Britain.

To sum up, the industry needs a long-term plan and the Government are trying to give it. The industry needs income to sustain it and I hope that we shall see some help in that area. Every possible new source of income must be tried in agricultural and rural areas. Above all, our agriculture must be allowed to compete on equal terms with its European counterparts, and not against the background of state subsidies or green pound variations. Only in that way can it survive. Given that, even with the negative price review which we simply must have this year, the industry can survive. My right hon. Friend the Minister should be fully supported in what he is trying to do to bring reality back to agriculture in Europe.

6.30 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I begin my remarks with an apology to the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), because I shall not be present for the winding-up speeches. I have an important constituency engagement.

I echo the tribute paid by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard). My hon. Friend has served her constituents and the causes in which she believes extremely well. She has always spoken in the House from experience and on the basis of principle. Whatever one may have thought—there have obviously been disagreements about the principles involved—she has done herself, her constituents and the causes in which she believes a great service. The House should pay attention to that fact.

The House is at one with the Minister in calling the price proposals tough. We have had, with one exception, a fairly even-tempered debate. This is because the debate takes place in the middle of the price negotiations. Indeed, they have not yet properly got under-way. That is always the way under the CAP. We must have a debate so that hon. Members can advise the Minister on their feelings about the Commission's proposals. The difficulty is that, under the system in the Community, once the Minister is launched on his way—there are all sorts of compromises and meetings and he reports back to the House from time to time — after the debate there is no longer an opportunity to form a collective view until we are eventually faced with the final proposals.

As the House will be well aware, the old adage about their being many a slip 'twixt cup and lip applies particularly to the agricultural price process in the Common Market. There is many a slip 'twixt Commission proposals and the outcome that Agriculture Ministers finally agree. Indeed, we might have a rather different debate if we were debating what Agriculture Ministers will agree in a month or two. Hopefully it will be in a month or two, but it may take longer than that.

I echo the sentiments of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North on the green currency issue, although I take a rather different view. Certainly there are distortions as a result of the agrimonetary system, which has become more and more complex. I do not know

[Mr. Eric Deakins]

whether the Ministers understand it. It is difficult for anyone who is not right in the middle of it to understand the technicalities of calculating coefficients, making comparisons and so on. Even *Agra Europe*, which has been around for the 30-odd years of the Common Market and has been specialising in agriculture, finds some difficulty in assessing what the actual impact of the Commission's proposals will be, let alone the impact of any modifications made by Ministers.

I wonder whether there is a case for using a computer, in Berleymont in Brussels, as I know the Americans and others do, in the trade negotiations under GATT to assess every proposal and the likely direct and indirect implications in a complicated series of calculations.

My worry about the proposals that the Commission has put forward is not that they will not go through—they may or may not go through; they will certainly be modified—but that the Commission has made some proposals on the agrimonetary front. I refer to previous speeches that I have made in agriculture and budgetary debates on Common Market matters. The impact of those proposals is likely to undermine the impact of the price proposal, which the Minister rightly described as tough, but they are price proposals in ecu terms, not in national currency terms. That is what farmers are paid. They are not paid in ecu; that are paid in pounds, francs and so on.

I understand that under the Commission's proposals, when there is a price freeze, six member countries, including ourselves, will be able to take advantage of the green currency devaluations, which, in effect, will help farmers who will not necessarily suffer the impact of the price freeze. A national Parliament—certainly national Ministers—can say that that is very good because we are doing the best for our farmers, but from a CAP point of view we are undermining the impact that the Commission is trying to create in the first place by having price freeze proposals in ecu terms, which, unfortunately, cannot be translated into national terms without the sort of distortions that have been mentioned.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Does the hon. Gentleman say that he approves of Eire being able to send huge quantities of beef here for the purely artificial reason that the green pound is distorted? That is not to do with the total volume of beef produced; it is to do with where it is fair to produce it.

Mr. Deakins: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. He made my point for me. Indeed, the point was made also by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North. The system is now so distorted that the impact of doing something in one area of the agrimonetary front can distort things in other areas. One must compensate for it in some other way. The whole system is a complicated financial and arithmetical mess.

The real problem that the Commission is trying to face it that of getting price cuts in countries, such as Germany, that have strong currencies and are big cereal producers. Until that problem is resolved we shall only halfheartedly tackle the problem of the growing cereal surpluses, of which the Minister was right to remind us, that are likely to occur in the next few years.

There is obviously general agreement in the House on the oil and fats tax. The Minister rightly said in his opening remarks—I do not wish to misquote him; this is the implication of what he said—that this could re-open a major trade dispute with the United States of America. Fortunately, by the skin of our teeth, countries on both sides of the Atlantic survived what might have been a disastrous trade confrontation on the business of cereals going to Spain and Portugal early this year following their entry into the Common Market. It would be not only imprudent but absolutely ludicrous of the Commission and, indeed, of the Council of Agriculture Ministers to provoke another conflict.

It would indeed be a provoked conflict, since the United States has not done anything to justify what the Commission is proposing. I do not avoid the point that some Third-world countries are affected as well, but the big impact will be on the United States of America. I know that the Minister is well seized of the feelings in the House and, probably, of the country as a whole, and that he will persist in his opposition to the proposed tax.

Cereal intervention restrictions, which I think will apply for five months of the year—from February to June—which we support and which obviously seem to be a good idea generally, seem to be fairly widely opposed in the Community. We seem to be, if not on our own, almost on our own in opposing them. I hope that the Ministers who go to the Council will be able, by using logical and rational arguments, to drum-up rather more support—not to the stage of blocking minorities or anything like that because we have a power of national veto—so that something will be done to try to ensure that the Commission's proposals are put into effect. That will certainly help on the cereals issue.

I do not wish to be unkind to our Minister, but I shall quote from *Agra Europe* of 27 March, commenting on the progress—there was little at that stage—of the price negotiations. Under the headline "Ministers' irresponsible attitudes", it stated:

"The attitude of the ministers"

—that is the Agriculture Ministers of the Economic Community—

"demonstrates a considerable degree of irresponsibility and an almost complete contempt for the non-agricultural section of society which has to foot the bill for their inability to take unpleasant decisions. Indeed, this year's succession of events — or rather non-events — demonstrates clearly, if such demonstration were ever needed, that the only concern of agriculture ministers is with the agricultural interests and not with the general public good."

I do not necessarily think that that applies universally to our Ministers, but it applies to a considerale number of Ministers in the Economic Community, who, unlike our Ministers of Agriculture, are not also Ministers of Food, with an interest in protecting the consumer. They are mostly other Agriculture Ministers and dismiss the consumer interest for what it is worth, because their interest is solely that of their domestic farmers.

I refer briefly to the impact of what has been proposed in the Budget and the general Budget situation, although, or course, this is not a Budget debate. I was horrified at the Minister's latest estimate from the Commission of the deficit in 1987. It is nearly 4 billion ecu. It was about 3·2 billion ecu. It seems to have gone up in the past month or two. In addition to that deficit, there is also a hidden deficit of 3·2 billion ecu. That is almost as much as that which, fortunately, was pushed to one side—I say "fortunately" because it was fortunate from the point of view of the 1987 budget—by the subterfuge of allowing national bodies to engage in butter dumping and to pay

for it themselves on the basis that they would be recompensed in a few years. *Agra Europe* calls it "borrowing", but by any other name it is a loan from national Governments to the Community. Loans are illegal under Community rules and regulations and the basic treaties and, therefore, one has to resort to increasing numbers of expedients to try to keep the situation going even though one is not righting it from one year to another.

The Common Market is very good at blaming other people for its own deficiencies. One has some sympathy for Agriculture Ministers because the fall in the value of the dollar has obviously added considerably, even since last year, to the cost of the common agricultural policy. I believe that the figure last month was about 1·2 billion ecu of the 4 billion that we are talking about, plus the 3·2 billion. That is a considerable proportion. In addition, the Community is its own worst enemy in terms of currency fluctuations both within and outside the European monetary system. We cannot blame the rest of the world for currency fluctuations in a trading bloc. We must sort it out between ourselves, and we are not doing that.

The fall in world prices, which technically might seem to be a matter outwith the control of the Commission and Agriculture Ministers, is affected greatly by the Community because it is the biggest, or the world's second biggest, exporter of agricultural commodities. If, as the United States is doing, it is dumping commodities on world markets at well below the cost of production, agricultural prices are bound to be depressed. There is no point in blaming the decline in world agricultural prices on the increased cost of the policy, because it is the policy that is to blame in the first place. We do not have a balanced budget. All that we have are evasions and subterfuges. I stress that that is the responsibility, not of Agriculture Ministers, but of Finance Ministers and Heads of State, who should take a grip on the whole thing but have not yet done so.

My last two comments are about matters raised by my hon. Friend the Menber for Pontypridd. The first is about VAT on food, on which I echo my hon. Friend's remarks. I know that it is said on behalf of the Prime Minister and, I think, on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the Government have no intention of introducing VAT on food. One accepts that. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food may not have said it, but I read in a fairly reputable newspaper recently that that is the case. Those words are not really necessary, because one never thought that even this Government had any intention of introducing VAT on food.

The key question about VAT on food is whether under pressure from the European Court or the Commission in the horse trading that goes on in Brussels over various issues, not merely about agriculture, but about other things, as part of the package of measures leading to the single European market to be created in 1992 our Government will be forced against their will to put VAT on food. I hope that I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd correctly. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) alluded to this, but it is an issue that will arise in the coming general election. It is not merely that one has no intention of putting VAT on food, but that one will on behalf of one's party if it gets into government resist the imposition of VAT on food. That is an important statement and I hope that all political parties in Britain will be prepared to make it. We shall have to wait and see.

The final matter with which I want to deal is food handouts to the needy, the pensioners in particular. Speaking about conditions locally, and also from what I hear from other hon. Members, the distribution did not always go terribly well, and that is putting it mildly. In case I might be accused in the approach to a general election of political bias, I shall quote from a circular issued by my branch of Age Concern, which was one of the two charities in Walthamstow involved in the distribution of food. The other was the Salvation Army. Age Concern is completely non-political and its circular says:

"Distribution of butter in Waltham Forest"—

that is my London borough—

"has been a fiasco, and we aren't the only part of London or Britain to say so. Information was late, co-ordination lacking, orders cancelled because suppliers couldn't supply, telephones were rung and most of all tempers were frayed on all sides. No-one has benefited, and few people have got any butter."

That may be a slight exaggeration because obviously some people did get butter.

The circular goes on:

"The goodwill and benevolence of voluntary organisations, including Age Concern, has been exploited—all we've got out of the butter mountain is headaches. No extra money has been given to groups like us for the costs of distributing at a local level, and so far it has cost us almost £100 in postage, telephone calls, copying and envelopes. And that's not counting all our normal work that hasn't been done."

That is a small local branch of Age Concern. The circular then talks about the lack of planning and distribution and the abuse that has been heaped on a voluntary body, by many angry pensioners who were not able to obtain supplies, or who, by the time they got to know about them, found that they had all gone.

The circular ends on a positive note and, with the best will in the world, I draw it to the attention of the Minister. It says:

"If there is a next time, the government must ensure:

1. satisfactory, fair distribution through reliable channels;
2. suppliers are given enough notice to release supplies.
3. the scheme is not publicised until it is ready to operate."

I pass on those thoughts in case we should ever be saddled with such a scheme again. These are really palliatives, because the butter and cereal mountains remain and there is no substitute for thoroughgoing changes—I shall not say reforms — in the structure and principles of the common agricultural policy.

One of the few good signs in the Commission's proposals is that we are asked to think about the future and not just about the immediate impact of price cuts and freezes, because there is a reference to possible direct income subsidies to farmers. I know that that is a vague idea that is floating around, but the fact that the Commission has mentioned it at this stage is interesting. One hopes that in due course Ministers will be able to give the House rather more information about what is intended. I know that at the moment there is very little flesh on the bones, but it could conceivably be a step in the right direction. However, there is a very long way to go.

6.45 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I shall be brief because many hon. Members wish to take part in this important debate. I have already said that since New Zealand has abrogated her obligations in defence, I see no reason why Britain should continue to admit New Zealand

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dairy produce to the United Kingdom market. It causes great damage to British agriculture and to the finances of the Community. The point about a 16 per cent. devaluation of the green pound needs to be reiterated. We should insist on that because there is no great merit in going half way. Some of my farmers have had a profit of only £17 a heifer after keeping them for more than a year. We must get that figure substantially increased.

It is vital to restore confidence in the ability to rent or lease milk quota on an annual basis. Many people planned on what was the reality but there is now chaos because doubt has been cast on the reality. I ask my right hon. Friend to do everything in his power to sort this out with the Community.

An important matter has not yet been raised, and it has to do with pigs. There is a hazard to pigs in Britain from classical swine fever which is endemic in Holland and West Germany, and which is eliminated only by very prolonged cooking. Moreover, some member states import infected pigs from Holland and West Germany and then process the pigmeat so that it reaches Britain from countries in which the disease was not originally endemic. This is widely known because every pig producer is told to make sure that no waste pork products from his own family's consumption find their way into his pig feed.

There is no way of stopping holiday visitors or others casting away ham sandwiches with undercooked ham in them, or from throwing away bits of pork pie and other such produce. On genuine, and not spurious, health grounds, we need to ban the import into the United Kingdom of pork products that have not been cooked for a very long time. That means cutting out all bacon, ham and sausages. We must do that before we are faced with the disaster of classical swine fever sweeping through our pig herds.

On the question of transferring milk quota from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, may I ask whichever one of my right hon. Friends will be winding up the debate why the under-quota in one part of the United Kingdom cannot be offset against the over-quota in another part?

Those are the principal points that I wish to make. I could make many others, but I know that many of my colleagues are waiting to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

6.50 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I shall not follow the line of the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), apart from deprecating his "guns or butter" remark about New Zealand. However, I shall follow what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) about the distribution of products in his constituency, arising from the Community system, to the elderly and those on welfare benefits. His experience is echoed everywhere.

If the Community is to come up with such schemes, which are not really social policy schemes but disposal schemes, they should be effective through the network of social distribution that normally applies. I think that most of the voluntary sector felt that the scheme was an imposition on their role, and that distribution on a mass scale was not the sphere of social policy to which voluntary organisations are geared. Departments and Ministers in the Community should think again when they bring forward such proposals.

The main part of what I want to say concerns direct income aids. First, however, let me join in the tributes paid to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard). Although I do not necessarily agree with her application of Socialist principles to agriculture when she demands immediate public land ownership, her fresh approach has always ensured a major and distinctive contribution. We shall miss her terribly from our agriculture debates, particularly on this side of the House.

As I keep reminding the House, I live in and represent most of the Snowdonia national park. I put that on record in the hope that I shall continue to do so. It is an area with a distinctive landscape, and also with distinctive agricultural production. The rural economy of Wales is based largely on livestock production, and areas such as Snowdonia have little alternative because of the nature of the terrain, the soil and the climate.

In 1986, the total value of Welsh farm output was £730 million, to which the dairy and beef sectors contributed over 60 per cent. That shows the key importance of those sectors in our economy. Any decisions taken at Community level in Brussels about those sectors will have a particularly strong impact on the agricultural economy in Wales.

Many farmers in Wales look with envy at the direct representation that the Republic of Ireland has always had as a member of the EEC, and see the force of the arguments put forward by some of us for a stronger Welsh presence in Brussels—including occasional visits by the Secretary of State for Wales, who has never been in Brussels as the Agriculture Minister. He will leave office as the longest-serving and most interventionist holder of that office without once having intervened in the agricultural negotiations affecting Britain. There is no reason why Welsh Office Ministers, as Agriculture Ministers in their own right, should not speak on behalf of the United Kingdom in the Community in the same way as Scottish Ministers. I do not expect the English Minister of State to respond to that point, but I put it on record as my tribute to the retiring Secretary of State.

I stressed the importance of the dairy and livestock sectors in Wales. Let me demonstrate the extent of the crisis by quoting from a survey undertaken by the Welsh Office Agriculture Department, which showed that in 1985-86

"one fifth of farm businesses made no income at all and almost half of the businesses in the survey earned substantially less than the wages of a general farm worker."

There is also a massive level of indebtedness, especially among marginal farmers, to the banks. Added to that, there are crises such as the one that recently overtook the lamb processing sector with the collapse of Welsh quality lamb production. The major losses sustained by Welsh sheep farmers came on top of the losses sustained as a result of the Chernobyl disaster. Although the Government have at last devised a compensation scheme that comes somewhat closer to meeting the need, they took a very long time to do so.

An examination of the various sectors of the Welsh farm economy shows clearly the undesirability of repeating the disastrous effects of imposed milk quotas in any future reductions in production. That is why it is essential that any quota scheme should be voluntary, that

the outgoers scheme should be made more attractive and that compensation for quota cuts should always be available as early as possible in the milk year.

We are also very concerned about the effects of the settlement announced in December involving extra cow slaughterings arising from milk quota cuts, on top of the lower level of price support for beef. Those effects are maximised in the livestock sector, and there is a knock-on effect through the system up to the store cattle production with which I am familiar in the hill areas of Snowdonia. That is why we need a substantial rise in the suckler cow premium, and to ensure that we do not see the major reductions in producers' returns that have been estimated by the National Farmers Union and others as being up to £60 per animal.

In the sheep sector, we must ensure—as other hon. Members have pointed out—that there is no transfer of productive resources from one sector to another. We heard earlier today about increased numbers of ewes and lambs in the south-east and south-west of England. That is very worrying for those of us who represent hill areas, where the main source of livelihood is from sheepmeat, and where there is no opportunity of diversifying into any other form of production. It is essential that we should consider either regional quotas, or at least some disincentive for areas not adapted to or suitable for sheep farming to take it up as quotas drive them out of other forms of production.

As we look to the longer term, we note the serious warnings about the future of agriculture, particularly in hill areas. One such warning has been quoted in the *Farmers Guardian* of 11 April. It quotes Professor John Marsh of Reading university, who is involved with the land utilisation group of the Agriculture Economic Development Committee, as saying:

"It might in future be better to steer hill farmers into non-farming activities rather than continue to support them at ever increasing cost".

Professor Marsh went on to talk about the contents of the land utilisation group's report, due to be published in May or June. It forecasts a likely fall of 18 per cent. in cereal acreage, and therefore a decline in livestock numbers over the next 10 years. That, said Professor Marsh,

"would have a 'shunting' effect on other areas of production such as the hills."

Those are the kind of serious long-term warnings being given, not only by leading long-term academics. In this morning's *Western Mail*, the county planning officer for Dyfed, Mr. David Bown, described the Welsh countryside as being turned into a "hillbilly" countryside,

"littered with abandoned agricultural machinery, broken fences and walls, together with unkempt fields and woodlands neglected by poverty stricken farmers under severe economic pressure".

That was his view of the effects on the countryside of harmful reductions in the standard of living and the incomes of Welsh farmers. His fear is that income reductions as a result of price squeezes are not met with forms of income support that will retain the livelihood of people in the countryside. It is to that point that I wish to turn for the main part of my remarks. I shall try to be brief. That is my practice, and I wish other hon. Members would follow it.

The effect of reducing the level of income through the price squeeze and not substituting by other means is what most concerns us as we look to the future of the countryside. That is why I welcome in principle the income aid proposals that were published by the Commission on 14 April. We are referring to a very small area—only 360 million acres a year for the next five years. This expenditure will probably be concentrated on the more severely depressed regions of the Community. From an earlier assessment of the proposals, it is not clear to me whether money will be available for those parts of Wales that I have described.

The proposals represent recognition by the Commission of the fact that the price squeeze effects of the CAP cuts can adversely affect certain regions and types of farming and there is a need for equity. The proposals have been welcomed in principle both by the Farmers Union of Wales and by the National Farmers Union. Mr. Maurice Trumper of the Welsh NFU has made the point that the proposals for direct income aid are no substitute for an effective commodity price support system, but he says that if they are well designed and adequately funded they could provide a useful supplement.

In that context, I ask the Government to look seriously at the proposals for direct income support through the pursuit of conservation policies that have been put to them recently by the Association of National Park Officers. The association stresses the harsh environment for agriculture in the national parks and says that changes at European level have a direct effect, because of the dependency on livestock and the marginal nature, in income terms, of the farming that takes place there. It proposes that the Departments that have responsibility for the national parks—the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment—should try to encourage farmers to perform what the association describes as

"the dual role of food producers and environmental managers."

The association stresses that farmers' conservation activities should not lead to the loss of income gained from food production. However, it believes that a positive approach to conservation should be adopted, the reward being pride in a job well done. The concern is that, if the price reduction policies of the Community have a negative effect on the livestock sector, the environment of the countryside and the pattern of the landscape will suffer as much from the artificially induced drop in support as, some conservationists have argued, it has suffered from over-development, over-farming and far too intensive stocking.

The Departments that have responsibility for agriculture should consider the introduction of positive policies. They have already started to do so. The Agriculture Act 1986 introduced the environmentally sensitive areas concept. We need to develop it much further. Conservation of the landscape of national parks should be regarded as a positive part of agricultural policy.

Landscape is not a crop, as is a particular food crop, but our agricultural policy should recognise the importance of the environment. Therefore, the Departments with responsibility for agriculture should look to the maintenance of landscape features and to the creation of new features. They should also look to the maintenance and use of traditional buildings and take into account all the diversification aspects that have been referred to by the Departments in the alternative land use in the rural economy programme and in its Scottish and

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Welsh equivalents. They represent a broad approach to the conservation of the landscape, the environment and the population of the national parks.

Agricultural policies should be used to bring about that result. It would require review and reform of the hill livestock compensatory allowances. It would also require an approach that combined environmental conservation with a lower level of food production. The impact of such changes on farming would have to be assessed in a most sensitive way. It would also require a regional and local approach to the kind of agricultural policy that we do not yet enjoy in the United Kingdom.

Within the framework of the European proposals for direct income aid there is an opportunity for the United Kingdom Government to take an initiative that would combine conservation and agricultural purposes. This is the European Year of the Environment. I hope that the Departments will respond to it.

7.4 pm

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Every hon. Member who is interested in agriculture will be very sad about the fact that we shall not hear my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) speak in future agriculture debates, but we shall of course be hearing again from my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We all agree that he has had a very difficult task. My husband always says that it is like inheriting a brewery when the beer has run out. There is no doubt that my right hon. Friend fights very hard to get a fair deal for our farmers.

I was relieved to hear my right hon. Friend reaffirm yet again this afternoon that he will not tolerate unfair discrimination against British farmers by the introduction of a two-tier price system, as was suggested by the Commission and enthusiastically but unwisely welcomed by the leaders of the alliance in January and repeated in various guises by the alliance at intervals since then.

It is not always appreciated in this country that the person we think of as a small farmer would be a large farmer in EEC terms, since their farms are only a third to a fifth the size of ours. Therefore, most of their farms would benefit substantially from two-tier pricing, while only about one in 10 of our smallest farms in such places as the Welsh mountains would benefit. That is probably where the policy came from. All other farmers would lose a great deal. That does not seem to matter to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), but it certainly horrifies the farmers and the NFU.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue successfully to resist these highly discriminatory proposals. My farmers are becoming increasingly restive about the continuing import of 76,000 tonnes of New Zealand butter. In the past I supported this policy. I do so no longer. We promised to continue these imports when first we joined the EEC, but for a limited period only. That period has long since gone, as has the justification for the policy. We should no longer allow New Zealand to send us butter. Instead, we should allow our farmers to have the benefit of increased quota. There can be no doubt that the measure that would do more than any other to improve the financial position of all our farmers would be an adjustment of the green pound.

The December devaluation, although very welcome, was only a drop in the ocean. We cannot tolerate a system whereby the Germans and the Irish can flood our market with beef because of the advantage of the artificial rate of the green pound. The Commission's proposal of a 4 per cent. devaluation is inadequate. We must press for 16 per cent. to give all our farmers a fair return on all their products.

I know that my right hon. Friend has fought hard to retain our excellent sheepmeat regime. It is crucial in my part of the world. I was glad to hear him say again today that he will keep up this fight. Beef is going through a very bad time. The beef variable premium must be retained at a fair rate. There are signs that other EEC countries are beginning to realise the advantages of this scheme, which puts meat into ovens instead of into intervention. I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to press this policy on his EEC colleagues and that he will get them behind him so that we are all pulling in the same direction. Because of the present heavy cow culling, there will be a great shortage of beef in three or four years, so an increase in the suckler cow premium is necessary. That would greatly help the smaller farmers.

One matter that is causing my farmers considerable concern is the suggestion that VAT should be applied to food. That would inevitably reduce consumption and cause hardship for poor families. I hope that my right hon. Friend will very strongly resist that suggestion. When farmers are having a difficult time and are still facing many problems, it seems to me to be quite unnecessary to annoy them by charging them for such services as inspections, which previously have been provided free. I hope that he will reconsider this policy as our economy continues to expand and the Treasury grip relaxes. My right hon. Friend the Minister has a tough battle ahead of him, and I wish him every success in it.

7.11 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I followed the speech of the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) with interest. I have never agreed with her before, but I agree with her point about charges for inspection to farmers, especially where it is hoped to persuade farmers to make a contribution to conservation. That charge seems to me to be unwise and distasteful.

I am not sure that I agree with the hon. Lady about New Zealand butter. I cannot recall the precise date of the agreement to which she referred. As a trading nation, it might pay us to examine our trading balance with New Zealand to determine whether it is healthy. Perhaps we should not imperil the manufactured goods that we may and should export to that country, as they may lead to more employment. Perhaps we should examine the less satisfactory trading balances between ourselves and certain member states of the EEC more closely than the hon. Lady would like. At least she recognised that British agriculture is in a grave situation.

When I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills)—should there be another agriculture debate after June, it is to be hoped that he will be able to make a second valedictory utterance — I reminded him that if a Labour Government had been in power in the present circumstances of British agriculture he perhaps, and

certainly some of his colleagues, would have led the parade of tractors and bewildered beasts being driven by angry farmers around Parliament Square and down Whitehall.

Hon. Members will not deny that farmers demonstrated with far more heat and for far less reason when Labour was in power than they do today, with all the difficulties that they face. For example, 9,000 jobs have disappeared from British agriculture in the past 12 months; the level of investment in farming is lower than it has been for generations; and farm incomes are now way below their level when the Labour Government were in office, or even when the Conservative Government who took us into the Common Market were in power. So there is genuine cause for concern.

I am amazed that, even given the natural inclination of many farmers not to rock the Conservative boat, they have not been more angry in their comments and positive in their actions. The Minister of Agriculture alone was singled out for criticism at the National Farmers Union conference. The farmers did not try to blame the rest of the Government. The right hon. Gentleman's shoulders had to be broad enough to bear the whole of the encomium that they lavished upon him. We, however, are complaining about the whole Government, not merely Ministers in the Department. That Department does not enjoy great esteem, and I shall come in a moment to my reasons for saying that.

I do not believe that the Government should rely as excessively as their dogma might persuade them to do on the pricing mechanism; nor should they rely on the advice that they are receiving from the hon. Member for Lancaster about the green pound. We need to be more searching about the policies of the Government and the alliance on this matter. The Government seem likely in the end to agree on a level of change in green pound values that would not satisfy the hon. Lady; nor would it satisfy the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who might wish to see a much greater change in green pound levels than the hon. Member for Lancaster. They will, of course, be very reluctant to explain to the voters what the consequences of their political commitment might be. Alliance policies would increase British food prices by well over 10 per cent., and possibly more than 15 per cent.—especially if their apparent espousal of the cause of applying VAT to food is realised. That is a logical deduction to make.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hardy: I am glad to note that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) is confirming that his side of the alliance is almost passionately opposed to the application of VAT to food. I rather think that hon. Members in the other half of the alliance are by no means so firm in their commitment. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is not here, because I suspect that when members of his party talk to farmers they will be in favour of the green pound changes at the maximum possible level, and when they talk to consumers they will stress their passionate concern to keep down the price of food.

I believe that the Minister has a responsibility to maintain the price of food at the lowest possible level, partly because people have to eat, partly because many people are less able to afford it if food prices rise, and partly because food needs to be consumed rather than put into storage, which costs a fortune. The alliance cannot have it both ways. It is time we heard clearly from the alliance where it stands in regard to food prices.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Some hope.

Mr. Hardy: We shall keep at them. At present, there is no Social Democratic party candidate in my constituency, but when one is appointed I trust that he will answer the questions that will immediately be presented to him about what his policies mean for food prices for the people that I and other hon. Members represent in south Yorkshire.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The hon. Gentleman must be joking.

Mr. Hardy: I never joke about matters such as food prices. The hon. Gentleman had better understand——

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman had better get an answer from the SDP.

Mr. Hardy: I am certain that we shall receive an answer. Whether the answer it will give in my constituency is the same as the one that it will give in that of the hon. Gentleman, is open to question.

I do not want the Government to think that they rest free from my criticism. They have let Britain down badly. We have borne an unfair share of the cuts in production that have already been experienced in the Community. It is outrageous that we should have experienced the scale of reduction of milk production that has taken place. There are likely to be further unnecessary and unfair cuts in that area. The dairy industry reminds me that a cut in quota of 8 per cent. would mean an effective reduction of 9·5 per cent., which suggests that the Ministry should reconsider the position, especially in view of the fact that we are importing one fifth of our dairy requirements.

If there is any logic in European agricultural policy, it should be to encourage specialisation. We should not try to grow tomatoes out of doors on a commercial scale because our climate is not suitable for it. However, our climate is suitable and our skills are relevant to the idea that Britain and Ireland should be the leading countries in grassland production. That is a logical development if Europe is to have any sense, although I sometimes doubt whether it ever will.

Sir Peter Mills: The hon. Gentleman must ask himself whether the views that he is advancing would be acceptable in Europe. One can say what one likes, but one has to obtain agreement from 12 Ministers of Agriculture.

Mr. Hardy: Much depends on the skill, persuasiveness and dedication of the Ministers who are engaged in the negotiations. The hon. Gentleman may have been slightly more persuasive than his hon. Friends on the occasions when he stood in for the Minister in negotiations. For a while I acted as chairman of the Agricultural Committee of the Council of Europe. I secured unanimous approval for a report on food supply in western Europe, and I suggested that some of the money that was currently used to store food could intelligently be devoted to the promotion of food consumption. I employed a German economist of some merit for the scheme, and I suggested funding a pioneer pilot project of daily milk deliveries in certain conurbations in West Germany, the Netherlands and one or two other member states of the Council of Europe.

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That was approved unanimously by the European Assembly, but, in my view, there are too many interests involved in storage to let an intelligent proposal of that kind get off the ground because it would have led to increased consumption. A daily delivery system is the reason why our milk consumption per capita is higher than that in Europe. Of course, intelligent proposals like that do not always prosper, but those who run storage systems or who own or rent hangers prosper.

The Minister may recall — certainly the Under-Secretary will recall — that late last year I raised in an agriculture debate the scandalous revelations of a gentleman who confessed on a Central television programme the most grave, criminal improprieties with regard to the storage of food. I did not press the matter further because I believed that, given the open admission of culpability, there would be a prosecution and that it would be inappropriate for the matter to be pressed in the House if it was to go, as it ought to go, to the courts.

I do not know whether there has been any prosecution or whether any prosecution is pending, but it is about time that the Government demonstrated to those in Britain who get involved in the criminal aspects of this matter that they cannot get away with it. I am advised that certain criminal practices are fairly widespread in parts of Europe. Therefore, it might be appropriate for this country to give a lead to ensure that the standards which should prevail with regard to the costly storage of food are maintained at a high level here and at a high level on the Continent as well.

I hope that the Minister will comment on that matter. As I said, I do not want to press it further if legal action is being taken. Because the Minister knows about the television programme, he will understand, given the admission of guilt on such an astonishing scale, that a prosecution is absolutely necessary. I am not prepared to accept that there can be no pursuit of justice in this matter simply because, ludicrously, the Official Secrets Act is extended to cover every aspect of food storage. That is monstrous and unacceptable.

My main purpose in speaking is to raise two matters. I shall be brief because I have not touched on either of them yet. The first refers to a matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins). I am full of admiration for those charities which were involved in the distribution of food. Therefore, I think it entirely inappropriate that those charities should have to bear considerable expenditure in order to pursue the distribution. It seems ludicrous that the Community—it is the Community and not the Government, although the Government might have supported the Community's requirement — should expect that the whole of this distribution should be the responsibility of the voluntary organisations.

In many parts of the country it would have been helpful if social services departments had worked in partnership with the voluntary bodies. It would have meant that the distribution perhaps would have been more equitable. It would have meant that perhaps more of the stocks of food would have been distributed, which was supposed to be the purpose, and it would be reasonable to suggest that, if there is to be a further exercise, some material support is given to the voluntary bodies, perhaps with the co-operation of local authorities, to make sure that those who qualify for the free food actually get it.

One other plea I make is that, if in the future there is to be a free distribution of food to the old and the needy, it should be distributed in reasonable weather. In my area old people had to queue up, sometimes for very long periods, on a bitterly cold day. That does not seem to me to be particularly sensible, and I hope that we shall wait until the season is more temperate so that we do not cause old people hypothermia.

The House will know that I am particularly interested in conservation. I trust that the Minister will allow me to make one or two references to the document "Farming and Rural Enterprise". Conservation bodies generally were rather receptive to the amendments to directive 797/85. The broad strategy seemed to be acceptable and wise, but there are a number of matters in that document which cause concern. One concerns forestry. I believe that we are getting our forestry policy wrong. I have suggested that too much of it is being concentrated solely on the cheapest land. That land, which is the target for forestry today, is the very land we need to safeguard for conservation purposes. We ought to be taking land out of agricultural production, and nothing would be more appropriate than taking out of production or safeguarding from production the important areas of moors, heath and similar wetlands that are still in danger. It is ludicrous that valuable sites of importance to the natural heritage should be at risk when we have a sensible opportunity to increase the area which could be of real importance.

A little while ago the Council of Europe had a conference on the environment and employment. We could assist rural employment by ensuring that higher priority is afforded to conservation. Therefore, I suggest that we need to reappraise the whole matter, that the Ministry ought to engage in consultations with the conservation bodies to clarify some of the questions that arise from the document the Government have issued, and that discussion on the future of forestry must be high on that list. It seems to me that the Government are neglecting future policy in regard to broadleaved woodlands.

We also need clarification from the Government on the question of planning and agricultural land. The Minister will be aware that there is serious unease about this matter. It will be helpful to the conservation bodies, which traditionally keep out of party politics, if the outstanding anxieties are resolved at an early stage. There is a real suspicion that there are Conservative Members whose particular concern with agricultural land is to see how much money they can make out of it regardless of the effect on the environment or the national interest. It is important to remove that anxiety.

I wish to make two other points. The Government are supposed to be making further designations in regard to environmentally sensitive areas. I welcome the steps that have been taken, but we need to know when the list of sites will be announced. The conservation bodies also want to know whether the highest priority will be given to those sites which are currently at serious risk — sites where wildlife populations, which depend heavily upon the maintenance of traditional farming methods, are under threat. If the Government rely predominantly on the price mechanism, there is a real risk that a number of farmers will run in order to stand still. They will seek to make up their income deficiencies not by looking for grants for

conservation policy, by selling land for development or by seeking to establish woodlands, whether traditional or not, but by further intensification of agricultural methods. That in itself could be dangerous, so we need some clarity to be offered to the House, the country and certainly to the conservation bodies at an early stage.

I trust that we shall have that reassurance because, if not, the anger which is felt by the farming community and which is likely to increase between now and the general election, whenever it is held, will be an anger which will generate in the conservation organisations and within the environment lobbies. They will see the Government as having turned down an opportunity which could be broadly welcomed, in which we serve the cause of intelligent agricultural policy and in which we make a substantial contribution to the environment. I trust that that opportunity will not be forfeited. If it is, the Government's popularity will ebb a great deal more quickly than they suspect.

7.28 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I shall take up some of the environmental points made by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) in a few moments.

This debate allows Conservative Members to reflect the concerns felt in their local rural communities at the immense policy changes that have been taking place in recent years. I say straight away that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has had the worst job in the Cabinet because he has had the unenviable responsibility of being left without a cushion when the music finally stopped in the game of EEC musical bumps.

For over five years I sat on the Opposition Benches more or less where the hon. Member for Wentworth is now sitting and I listened to Lord Peart and the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) announce expansionist White Papers on agriculture; indeed, they were pressed by the Conservative Opposition Front Bench to go further and faster in encouraging growth in domestic agricultural production and import savings. From the Conservative Front Bench in Government my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) spoke in precisely the same vein.

The responsibility for the political lead given to our farmers to produce more lies not in the fields or farmhouses of Britain or at the headquarters of the National Farmers Union, but with all parties in the House and with Brussels, where successive Labour and Conservative Ministers, with all-party support, went to EEC meetings between 1973 and 1983 advocating expansionist policies and receiving enthusiastic responses from other EEC countries.

The fault is not in our stars but in ourselves, and we have the responsibility to sort it out, in a way which will not hobble one of our most efficient and productive industries or damage the very heart of rural Britain, to which the Conservative party is committed and from which it draws so much of its strength.

No one disputes that surpluses represent a grave problem. The Public Accounts Committee, on which I serve, was told last month that the net storage cost to the United Kingdom Exchequer of stocks in intervention in 1986 was £66 million, and that the notional value of the stocks was £1,100 million. Equally, it is worth remembering the Bible story of Joseph in Egypt and the seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Stocks are not all valueless, as the recent sales to Spain have shown. The Milk Marketing Board tells us that we are moving into the unhappy position of being only 80 per cent. self-sufficient in milk products in 1988-89. We are thus faced with the prospect of importing other EEC countries' dairy surpluses to meet our own demands.

There is no justification for the present level of the green pound, which urgently needs drastic adjustment. The co-responsibility levy for milk has no rational purpose in a regime of quotas and outgoer payments, We need clear indications whether EEC funds are really available to sustain the beef market from the cull cow threat, and, if so, how they are to be disbursed. New quota figures for milk will be reaching farmers next month. They will need clear answers to their problems. We will need to improve the compensation for quota cuts by topping up and I see no reason why the 27·5p per litre compensation for the next 1 per cent. cut should be staggered over seven years. The producers are experiencing the problem now. For example, they have to pay dairy inspection charges now; those payments will not be staggered over seven years.

I know that the Government will not underestimate the concern felt by Britain's milk and beef producers, who do not dispute the need for surpluses to be tackled. They have to come to terms with the quota system. However, farmers insist that their vital and productive industry needs both proper transitional support to get it through the necessary changes and equal treatment with other EEC countries. That is why action on the green pound and the level of compensation for outgoers is needed. A 4 per cent. change in the green pound rate is clearly completely inadequate to deal with the dislocation in the industry.

The thrust of Government policy document, "Farming and Rural Enterprise", which appeared last March, was a commendable attempt to tackle the central issue from which we have previously tended to shy away—if the return available to farmers for their product falls, whether through direct price cuts or tougher intervention standards, how are they to maintain their family incomes? They cannot be expected to say, "Thank you. We will make do with less." They will produce more to obtain the same money or seek solutions such as fallowing land through set-aside if there is proper compensation from the EEC, or reduce their fertiliser content.

The documents rightly point out that there are other options. I hope, however, that they will be seen basically as agricultural options because it should be no part of Conservative agricultural policy to take vast amounts of land permanently out of rural use and cover it with concrete. To return to Joseph in Egypt, we may need that land for crops again, and perhaps not in the far distant future. Acceptable options would include other non-surplus crops, set-aside fallowing, and certainly trees and hedgerows. Organic farming, too, is increasingly popular with consumers. But concrete is not acceptable unless the land has been officially designated for housing in the county structure plan.

Fortunately, Environment Ministers have jumped on some of the wilder assertions in the media and elsewhere that developers could now cover the countryside with houses. That was never even remotely true as was widely understood at the time by the housebuilding industry, which was never under any illusions that the planning

[Mr. Michael Latham]

system was being dismantled. But there was an awful lot of unnecessary heartache before that was accepted by those who are not specialists in such matters.

Real villages need working farms, pursuing agricultural activities. They also need other work, which is why I am glad that the emphasis has been placed on converting redundant agricultural buildings for local industrial use.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: And retain enough children in villages to keep the schools open.

Mr. Latham: Yes; I agree with my hon. Friend.

I am sure that most of us are enthusiastic about the work done by the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas, but let us not close our eyes to the possible environmental problems. We have all heard ludicrous stories of planning permissions being refused for one-man village blacksmith operations. Equally, we all know that operations involving metal bashing can bring in their wake noise and heavy traffic to minor village roads, especially if the business is successful and expands. One delivery trailer and tractor a week can become one or two juggernauts a day.

The problems need to be thought through, and attention given to noise control, vehicle access and hours of working if planning permission is being given for the conversion of premises in villages. There are plenty of disused barns outside villages, which can be of immense help in that regard. Projects involving them need special attention and encouragement.

We should look again urgently at the imposition of VAT on such conversion operations. I moved an amendment to the 1984 Finance Bill to maintain zero rating for conversions of such disused barns. The Government accepted the spirit of the amendment but restricted the concession to listed buildings. That has been helpful for heritage properties but the new circumstances demand every encouragement for rural conversions to industrial or, indeed, residential use, and it may be appropriate to return to the matter if the Committee stage arrangements for this year's Finance Bill and the rules of order will allow it.

We have set ourselves the task of turning round the vast tanker of agricultural production. Nearly all of us set it going in one direction and we cannot now seek to turn it round the other way and simply tell the farming community, which is in the wash of the tanker, "Sorry, you will all get soaked or sink. That is the way it is." In our hands lie the stability and viability of the very core of rural Britain, which has developed and changed over centuries and is the envy of many other nations and millions of visitors to our shores.

My right hon. Friends have an awesome responsibility laid upon them to carry with them the farming community in this difficult task. I know that they are working hard to try to discharge it, but there is much to be done and we wish them well.

7.39 pm

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): We started today's debate in the presence of a whole complement of MAFF Ministers, a Minister from the Scottish Office and even the Secretary of State for Wales. When Welsh Members write to Agriculture Ministers in Whitehall their letters are soon sent down the road to the Welsh Office or to Cardiff because, in agricultural matters, Wales is devolved. Those of us who support a Welsh Assembly feel that that would be the ultimate answer, but at the moment we have to put up with what we have.

When we write to the Secretary of State for Wales he appears to accept some responsibility for Welsh agriculture, but seems reluctant to involve himself in discussions at European level on behalf of Wales. Throughout Wales there has been a consistent sense of let-down because the Secretary of State for Wales refuses to act on the farmers' behalf. We look across the Irish sea and notice the great advantages that the Irish negotiators are able to bring to that country, yet Wales, with the same topography, weather, problems and agricultural complexes, is not adequately represented. Agriculture is never discussed on the Floor of the House from a Welsh point of view, yet Welsh agriculture has its special place in the economy of Wales. We hear arguments on the Floor of the House about rate support grant, but if we want to discuss agriculture in Wales we must discuss it in the Welsh Grand Committee.

I hope that hon. Members will excuse me if I tend to concentrate on Welsh agriculture, because I feel, in direct contrast to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), that Welsh farmers have not come to grips with quotas. There is still a great divide between Welsh farmers and the implementation of quotas. That divide does not end at the farmyard or the farm gate. We know from the research work of the university of Aberystwyth that, since the introduction of quotas in 1984, 1,700 jobs have been lost to the rural economy in west Wales. It is estimated that if the quotas for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are further carried through there will be further job losses of 1,300 people in that part of Wales. We are not talking about areas with unemployment of 7, 8 or even 12 per cent. Ministers know that the unemployment rates in some of the travel-to-work areas in the valleys of south-west Wales are 24 and 25 per cent. Some of those areas are represented at Westminster by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Welsh grassland farmers feel that the Community measures have taken insufficient regard of the nature and the future of local farming enterprises. These measures are being foisted on an industry that cannot cope with instant management decisions, and an industry within which conditions of work and practice cannot adapt overnight without an unacceptable lowering of activity. That lowering of activity means not only farmers going to the wall but creameries being closed. There are far too many outright casualties in these parts of south-west Wales. Sixty per cent. of the total value of Welsh farm output is contributed to by the dairy and beef sectors, yet those two sectors were almost singled out for attention, which would have caused further aggravation to a barely viable industry.

Overall, 1986 resulted in better all-round increases in income, but they were achieved against the background of the previous year, when 20 per cent. of farmers had no income at all and nearly half the farmers earned less than the average of farm workers, and we all know what relatively poor remuneration they receive. Since 1983-84, the overall trend has been downward. Bank indebtedness continues to mount, with borrowing having doubled in the past five years. Nowhere is this trend more dangerously reflected than in the continuing fall in the amount of plant, machinery and vehicle investment. That is certain proof of a continuing lack of confidence.

An over-valued green currency has made British agriculture a very poor competitor. The 6 per cent. change from the beginning of this year was specifically meant to deal with the Irish Republic's beef imports, which were so critically undermining our domestic market. That move was certainly not enough and its beneficial effect was blatantly transient. We now have accurate evidence of the losses sustained from the cuts following the previous restraints introduced in 1984 on milk production. They go far wider and deeper than the farmyard and the farm gate. With the milk sector forming some 37 per cent. of Welsh agricultural output, further cuts will mean further closures and more redundancies in para-farming industries, such as cattle-feed mills, and in all rural service industries.

Welsh farmers are adamant that, although the current package of measures is meant to curb over-production in farming in Germany or France, it is having serious effects on south-west Wales, and the Government should be giving far more sympathetic protection through national domestic intervention. Keeping the variable beef premium scheme virtually unchanged until the end of 1988 is gratifying, but the sector cannot be treated in absolute isolation, for there are bound to be knock-on effects from the imposed fall in dairy production. The 10 to 13 per cent. cut in beef intervention prices could be balanced by a far better suckler cow allowance than hitherto.

Dairy farmers at least thought that they knew what to expect for the coming two years, but the voluntary outgoers scheme has been shown to have failed miserably. The unattractiveness of conditions was clearly predictable to all. If this was a realistic gesture to make people leave dairy farming, at least part of the overall seven-year payment should have been made available, perhaps in the first or the second year. Money would then have been available so that people who wanted to diversify had the money to go into some form of other agricultural activity.

Small farms should have the first 200,000 litres exempt from the scheme. Those farms are the backbone of a viable rural economy. Incidentally, they contribute relatively little to the total volume of production. Despite deep reservations about income aids, that change would give valid socio-economic assistance, greatly assisting efforts as diversification and environmental protection. With profitability in the beef sector precariously low, cuts in the dairy herd result in the greater market availability of by-product beef from that source eroding profits even further. The United Kingdom Government are continually reluctant to support measures to make it a practicable proposition to give up milk production. Such inducements are preferable to forcing farmers out of business, leaving a trail of tragic circumstances which are becoming prevalent nationwide.

The Governments of certain member states unhesitatingly set about ameliorating Community-imposed policies that adversely affected their local agriculture. They did so through packages of internal national measures, without considering that their impact was grossly disproportionate and discriminately unfair to other member states. It appears that the Brussels bureaucrats have long forgotten the terms of article 39; that one of the prime objectives of the CAP is to ensure a fair standard of living for all agricultural activity. They have obviously forgotten that, or how else could the present deleterious position be allowed to continue?

There is a need for a policy to meet the needs of our domestic market, but we know now that we are only 80 per cent. self-sufficient in milk products. Therefore, our domestic market is becoming an even greater target for imports from other member states. I appeal to the Minister to realise that grassland farming needs two essential elements — support and stability. At present, the Government are not providing either adequately.

7.50 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) described the problems of Welsh farmers, but he omitted to mention the major problems of new potato production in Pembrokeshire.

This is a debate of major importance. The rural economy of this country is tied indestructibly to the fortunes of the agriculture industry and the success of farmers in general, and it is essential to the well-being of the nation. The real tragedy is that if our steel production, the motor industry and engineering had attained the increase in productivity achieved by the British farmer, Britain's world competitive position would make the Japanese or the Americans look like poor industrial relations. The further tragedy is that this greater productivity on farms has created grave difficulties, massive overproduction and surpluses that beset Britain and Europe today.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills), who has given his life to agriculture and practical farming, being himself a farmer. He became a successful Agriculture Minister and also served as a Minister in Northern Ireland, where he is well remembered.

For the last eight years he has been chairman of the Conservative Agriculture Committee. My hon. Friend—and friend he is—is retiring at the next election, so we may have heard his last speech in this House on agriculture. I hope, however, that we can hear him outside this place. My advice to somebody on the Front Bench is that we might hear of him in another place when the time—not too far distant—duly arrives. He has won the trust and respect of hon. Members on both sides of the House with his sincere practice to the CPA—and I mean the CPA not the CAP. His achievements as a Member of Parliament have been massively successful—successes that any of us would be glad to have when we leave this Chamber.

The CAP and the green pound must be seen in two lights. We must understand what the Minister has achieved. In December the United Kingdom secured a devaluation of 6 per cent. for beef and 3·2 per cent. for sheepmeat. We secured a devaluation of 3 per cent. for livestock and 1·5 per cent. for arable products in the 1986 price fixing round. The combination of these devaluations adds £210 million to producer returns in a full year. However much we may be critical of other things, that is not to be sneezed at and it is of importance.

On the other hand, many sectors of British agriculture are being undermined by the competitive advantage given to producers in other EEC member states by the United Kingdom green pound gaps, which currently give rise to taxes on exports and subsidies on imports which may amount to 20 per cent. in certain areas. The Commission's proposal of a 4 per cent. reduction in the United Kingdom monetary compensation amounts appears to ignore the severe problems that are now facing our agriculture.

[Sir Peter Emery]

Farming income in this country has fallen sharply—probably more sharply than any other EEC country in the period from 1978 to 1979.

A substantial across-the-board devaluation is necessary if discrimination against United Kingdom farmers is to be ended. On the other hand, I am conscious that sterling's depreciation over the past year has meant that our farm support prices, if they are converted into the currencies of other member states, have fallen significantly since 1985, when for a period they were the highest in the Community. In sterling terms the position is very different. The support prices that are actually available to farmers have not fallen. Indeed, they have risen over the past year as a result of green pound devaluation.

The monetary gap between the green pound and market rates of exchange remains significant, and I believe that we ought to set our minds to curing it. Much of this gap has developed since green pound rates were reviewed in the 1986 price fixing. At that time we acted successfully, but the consequences of devaluation made in mid-year by France and Ireland have had other effects.

Green rate changes should be made at the time of price fixing, when the effects of those changes on farm support prices and domestic inflation and on Community and public expenditure can be fully considered. Since the 1960s I have taken the view that the green pound structure was wrong and artificial and was bound to bring about dissatisfaction and unfairness and problems in agriculture. I have always held the view that prices should be down to the parity of individual exchange rates of currencies within the Community. I claim that this should go hand in hand with Britain's entry into the European monetary system.

We must get down to a parity position. At times the green pound exchange rate will be beneficial to farmers, but there will be greater periods when it will prove to be a major disadvantage to Britain. If parity is not to occur this year—and it is most unlikely that it will—we have to say to the Minister that devaluation must be in the area of 15 or 16 per cent. It will not be acceptable if the Minister returns with a devaluation that, at a minimum, is not in double figures. I am sorry to talk in those terms, but it is essential that the Minister should go back to the negotiations in Brussels knowing the strength of feeling of farmers in general and this Parliament in particular on this matter.

Action on prices alone to control surplus production and the costs of the guaranteed section of the common agricultural policy will bring a degree of hardship to agriculture. We cannot escape that. It would be wrong of any Member of this House to attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of British farmers. We cannot be two-faced about this matter. It is no use complaining about the Irish and the French, when we wish to send our products into France. We have to realise that we are in the Common Market and that we cannot be beneficiaries to all sides in a proper marketing structure.

If surpluses are to be contained, it will be necessary to reduce the intensity of production on some land and to take other land out of agriculture. These changes could be encouraged under the guidance section of the common agricultural policy. I believe that to date far too little attention has been paid in the United Kingdom to the guidance section and to its use to encourage changes in land use. The decision taken by the Council of Ministers at its meeting of 2 and 3 March to adopt a socio-structural package that included proposals for extensification of production was a step in the right direction, but progress has been extremely slow. Unless the proposals are implemented soon, they will come too late to have any impact on the 1988 harvest.

I have a specific and perhaps involved question about the outgoers scheme, which is designed to reduce the national milk quota by 2 per cent. Participants in the scheme will receive a payment of 27·5p per litre that will be spread in equal proportions over seven years. I and most hon. Members who are concerned with agriculture wish to see the scheme work because it is more attractive than open market private sales as part of it relates to price and part to taxation.

Is it correct that the successful applicant under the scheme can choose the system of payment that he wishes to follow and that this in turn determines the taxation arrangement which applies, or is it correct that outgoers may apply either for compensation for loss of profits for the seven years immediately after ceasing to produce milk or for the surrender of the milk quota? I believe that payments in respect of the loss of profits are liable to tax as income in each year whereas payments in respect of the surrender of quotas are liable to capital gains. It is important that these mechanisms are understood because that understanding will make a quite significant difference to the way in which judgments are made by those in the farming community. I hope that my question will be answered when my right hon. Friend the Minister of State replies.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on making it plain that in the current negotiations he is seeking to ensure that there are fair shares for all those who are involved in the problems that British agriculture is having to suffer. My right hon. Friend wishes to ensure that the burden is shared by all members of the Community, not only by Great Britain, which may have seemed to be the position in the past.

My right hon. Friend has done a remarkably fine job in representing Britain at the EEC. Few Ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have had as much practical experience of farming as my right hon. Friend, and none has had more knowledge of agriculture. I know how much he must wish it were not necessary to make demands on farmers to cut production. If any man wants to see an expansion of production, it is my right hon. Friend. However, if any man is to bring about a reduction in production with knowledge and understanding, my right hon. Friend is that man. More should have realised, especially those in the NFU, that when the PESC review took place in the autumn of 1986, Treasury Ministers were looking for a major reduction in the amount of aid going from the Treasury to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. However, my right hon. Friend had to concede only the £90 cost for the drug inspection charge. That was an amazing personal achievement for him in resisting the major overtures that were being made by the Treasury. Farmers and the leadership of the NFU should understand that.

If my right hon. Friend were to leave his office, I do not believe that any new Minister—I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for expressing this view—would have such a natural understanding of farmers. I do not think that any other person would be able to

achieve anything like the respect that my right hon. Friend has been able to achieve. His successor would not be able to turn the views of European Agriculture Ministers as he has done, especially during the six months of his chairmanship during the latter part of 1986. British agriculture should be extremely grateful for the work of the Government, and especially for that of my right hon. Friend the Minister in representing Britain in Europe and the industry in general.

8.5 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I think that we are in some danger of developing complacency in this debate about the situation confronting our agriculture. The position of many small producers is desperate. Some Members recognise that and have said so and others have failed to acknowledge it. Some producers are at the eleventh hour. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) mentioned the possibility of hill-billy type farming in Wales. I can tell the House that it is being practised already, and in some measure. It is the only way in which some individuals are making out. That is a sad state of affairs for a great industry.

Agriculture is the United Kingdom's most important industry and food production must remain the most important activity that takes place in the countryside. We shall forget that at our peril. Farm incomes are declining and we are in danger of having two farming nations, with one in which some farmers do very much better than others. The livestock sector has been especially badly hit. There have been some significant bankruptcies of farmers in Wales and others are receiving family income supplement. It is not good enough to have farmers on incomes of £60 or £80 a week when they have to live on that and, in many instances, finance interest payments. There is no alternative employment to be found in many areas. Indeed, alternative employment opportunities have declined in the past two years, especially since the invocation of milk quotas.

The average income of farmers is 40 per cent. lower now —I take the period 1984 to 1986—than during 1973 to 1976. This is extremely serious, because at the same time there is record borrowing within the industry, amounting to about £6 billion. The Community's proposals for structure support and direct income aid need seriously to be considered. These proposals offer possibilities for supporting small farmers, who are now literally on the breadline.

There are particular difficulties in the less-favoured areas, where livestock producers are having a struggle, especially in the beef and sheep sectors. When the members of the Select Committee on Agriculture visited Brussels recently they were informed that this summer there would be a major review of the sheepmeat regime. Many hon. Members have rightly stressed the importance of the regime to British agriculture. We must resist the proposal that there should be cut-offs of 1,000 ewes in less-favoured areas and 500 on the lowlands in the implementation of the ewe premium. These proposals must be thrown out neck and crop, for they would discriminate against British farmers. The sheepmeat regime, the variable premiums and the hill land compensatory allowances that go with it are vital to many livestock areas.

We must also examine the problem of the balance of sheepmeat production between upland and lowland farmers. What are we going to do? What proposals have the Government for ensuring that sheep production remains profitable in the less-favoured areas? What proposals have they for restricting in some way the possible vast expansion of sheep production on the lowlands? With the December agreement proposals, decreases in the milk quota and reductions in beef prices, many farmers on the lowlands, with the cereal sector too coming under pressure, are considering going into sheep farming. There is a real danger that farmers in the less-favoured areas will be hit in one of the few commodities that are profitable at the present time.

Looking at the December agreement, the 13 per cent. reduction in beef intervention prices will lop off approximately £60 per head on beef animals sold. We see inadequate devaluation of the green pound and refusal by the Government, in another context, to raise hill land compensatory allowances in the current year for beef production.

I congratulate the Government on retaining the variable premium. It is absolutely essential to keep this. It keeps food prices down. I reject wholly what has been said by an Opposition Member that the alliance is in favour of putting value added tax on food. This is an outrageous suggestion. We are absolutely and totally opposed to that.

Under the December agreement, we are likely to see over the next two years an 8·5 per cent. reduction in milk quotas, and the knock-on effect of that in the dairying areas will be immense. In Wales, the north-west and the south-west this is a reduction which producers are unable to accept, and they must be compensated much more adequately for that loss in milk quota. Certainly we are extremely concerned about this, because many farms will lose their viability. This will mean that more farmers will leave the land and more creameries will close. As has already been said, in Wales alone we are likely to lose a further 1,300 creamery workers as a result.

The Commission's proposal for a 4 per cent. reduction in the green pound is absolutely pathetic in the current state of British agriculture. We must have a 16 per cent. devaluation. This is the best possible way that we can help British farmers. It is calculated that for every 1 per cent. devaluation of the green pound there is an increase in income to British farmers of £30 million. This is an important way in which farm incomes can be boosted at the present time.

I ask the Minister to tell us why it was that his right hon. Friend's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), was able in the first two years of the Conservative Government, from 1979 to 1981, to wipe out the unfair discrimination from green pound distortions to parity. Why is it that his right hon. Friend is unable to do that in 1987 to produce a fair situation for farmers? That question needs to be answered.

In the long term we need to take a much more radical look at the European monetary system. I make a particular plea that Britain should join the European monetary system as soon as possible. We know that this is in the best long-term interests of this country. By joining the EMS we will have a real chance to sort out the distortions that take place in the money markets.

We in the alliance see that as a move towards a unified European currency. One would hope that one day, when the price settlement is made in Brussels, it will be made in European currency units that will apply right across the board to every country in the Community. We shall then know what we are talking about, instead of having to face

[Mr. Richard Livsey]

the horrible distortions of MCAs and calculations of other kinds whose effects are almost impossible to work out. Indeed, in joining the EMS we would see an immediate 2 per cent. reduction in interest rates and a saving of £240 million for British agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: On what evidence does the hon. Gentleman say that interest rates would fall by 2 per cent. if we joined the EMS? Will he tell us exactly why he says that, when the evidence is that it might be that, but that it might also be a rise of 2 per cent.?

Mr. Livsey: The Minister has just admitted that there are two schools of thought on this, and some economists have calculated that there will be a 2 per cent. reduction. All I can say is that this move is supported by the Governor of the Bank of England and most of the right hon. Gentleman's party, except the leadership. I find this an extraordinary state of affairs.

Moving on to ALURE, as has already been said, this is a cosmetic package. The farm woodlands scheme with a grant of £125 per hectare is inadequate to replace the gross margins that are seen in the lowlands, particularly in the cereal sector. The Minister will have to do better than this if he wants to see more land go into woodland. I am particularly concerned about a conflict of interest with regard to environmentally sensitive areas. To quote one example, in the Cambrian mountains environmentally sensitive area there are payments on woodlands of about £30 per hectare. Yet the tax concessions given for forestry and commercial forestry are greater than that and the farm woodlands scheme itself provides more than that. There is a right mix-up in the forestry proposals, and they need to be sorted out rather rapidly.

I was delighted to hear the Minister accept the Commission's concept of guaranteed thresholds. I believe that it is absolutely necessary to accept this, because we then can give worthwhile support for commodities and ensure that farm incomes are adequate, particularly since these proposals are to be administered within the United Kingdom. I see these proposals as identical to those put forward by the alliance at the present time. The important thing is that they will be administered in the individual countries of the Community, will take care of the farm structure in those countries and certainly will not discriminate against British farmers.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to the Treasury influence, which seems to be more and more pernicious with regard to agricultural policy. I believe that the December agreement which was hailed as a triumph, was a triumph for the Treasury, because it meant that the Treasury had its hands on the money very tightly indeed, and agriculture lost out.

The Chancellor said recently that he was looking for big reductions in agricultural subsidies. We would all like to reduce expenditure, but agriculture needs time to adjust, and it is not being given that time. I gather that the Prime Minister has invited the farmers' leaders to a junket at No. 10 next week. It sounds to me as if the Conservative party is becoming extremely alarmed about disaffection within agriculture with a general election coming and that the boat is being pushed out to try to influence the farmers' leaders. They should not be taken in by such moves. Farming is a long-term business. It needs a stategy and it needs support, because it is Britain's greatest industry.

8.19 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I will begin my remarks, as others have begun theirs, with a tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills). Ever since I have been in this House he has spoken on agricultural subjects, and I think that those who have listened to him within the House and outside it have always respected his consistency, realism and, above all, truthfulness. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), I hope that he will be found employment elsewhere in this Palace when he retires from here at the end of this Parliament.

In a few moments I should like to comment on the remarks of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), and to underline the woolliness of the agricultural policy as put forward by the two hon. Members who have spoken from the alliance Benches.

To begin with, I should like to pass on some of the thoughts of my farming constituents and also my own thoughts because, as some hon. Members know, I am involved in agriculture. The anxieties about their futures of some of the farmers in my constituency still persist. Looking at the proposals in their raw state, I can see why. The proposals have been prepared by EEC mandarins with little thought for the national or local consequences. We shall again have to rely on the tenacity and proven ability of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when it comes to renegotiating our position in Brussels. Opposition Members may laugh and scoff, but the fact is that in his previous incarnation my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) was persuasive and determined when one or two of us sought to step out of line.

Farmers have now accepted that price pressures are inevitable and they get the drift of my right hon. Friend's thinking. The modest steps that have been taken to help farmers to develop alternative incomes have, in most quarters, been accepted as a modest step in the right direction and as outlining my right hon. Friend's future thinking.

Like other speakers in the debate, I urge steady movement to give our farmers time to adjust because this is a slow moving business. There is no doubt that mainline food production will always be the principal occupation of farmers in this country. Farmers are farmers, and that is how they want to stay. They do not want to be a collection of park keepers, at least those in the Forest of Dean do not.

It is important that we do not lose sight of reality. Those of us who are involved in agriculture know that mother nature is a hard taskmaster and does not perform according to any routine. Nobody denies that surpluses are too large at the moment. However, as I mentioned earlier today, there has been a substantial rundown in grain surpluses in this country. It would be unwise to run them down to nothing. Just as few housewives carry no stocks whatever in their larder, similarly farmers always carry a bit of surplus hay or other livestock fodder in their barns if they possibly can. As a nation that is a judicious thing for us to do.

Food from Britain has heralded new thinking in farming, and I welcome that. There is massive scope for increased sales in our high streets today. The fast service restaurant industry is making huge inroads and selling huge amounts of beef, chicken, potatoes and milk. I do not

know whether my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is aware of the fact that the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972, which governs planning permission for the opening of more of those establishments, is up for review. At the moment, it substantially inhibits the development of many such establishments. I ask my right hon. Friend to use his influence if possible and to bring it to bear on the Department of the Environment when that Act is reviewed.

I accept that there is a huge cost for storing surpluses. As I have said before, output must be cut. We should divert funds to farmers rather than to storage. Something must be done about that. Set-aside or temporary suspension — call it what one will — may well be the answer in the future. Would it be possible to have a once-and-for-all operation to bring down to reasonable levels the enormous amount of food that we have in our stores at the moment? We shall do what we can to give it away, or to sell it at low prices, but let us get rid of it. If we cannot give it away, why cannot we simply write off the debt and get rid of it, as has been done for other nationalised industries? It may seem unchristian or anti-social to burn it or dump it in the sea, but at least we could end the cost of storage and divert that money to farmers rather than giving it to the people who are running the stores.

As has been said, farming incomes are falling like a stone. We are told to get efficient, and we are. However, all over the country, not only in parts of Wales, many farmers earn less than humble labourers. I wonder how those in Europe square that with the treaty of Rome, which states that all EEC citizens should have a reasonable standard of living. I should be grateful for any way in which my right hon. Friend could bring that to the attention of those who run European affairs. The incomes of farmers in the United Kingdom are falling faster than those of farmers in the EEC.

Turning to the EEC in general, I must pass on to my right hon. Friend the fact that west Gloucestershire farmers were stunned by the imposition of the dairy inspection charge. They thought that it was unfair and seemed uncaring. May we have an assurance from my right hon. Friend that farmers in the United Kingdom are not being unfairly treated? Perhaps he can reassure us that dairy quotas are being implemented in Italy in the same way that they are here, and that German farmers who have over-produced will be liable to pay the super-levy themselves and that it will not be paid by their Government.

May we also have some guidance on the future of quota leasing? For some of the small farmers in my constituency, quota leasing is a lifeline for the viability and future of their farms. If they do not have the cash to buy, they must lease. There is great uncertainty at the moment about whether that will continue. My right hon. Friend will probably remember that in the Select Committee recently I asked him about that and he reassured the Committee that he would do his best to ensure that quota leasing would continue. I hope that he will reassure us on that again this evening.

However, we crave fairness and need to be reassured that other farmers are not being insulated from the EEC's measures by their Governments. The greatest unfairness that we face in the United Kingdom is, as other hon. Members have said, the totally different values of green pound levels between ourselves and other European farmers. I, too, make a plea for the devaluation of the green pound. It would not undermine our competitive position for sales abroad but would put more cash into farmers' pockets.

If it is not asking too much of him, will my right hon. Friend ensure ease of entry for our products into other EEC markets? Recently the Germans have been told that they must open up their market to beers from other countries. Previously that market was totally blocked. On the radio, I recently heard about the impending pasta war in Italy. The Italians have apparently been blocking the entry into Italy of pasta made in other EEC countries. Although it meets EEC standards, apparently it does not come up to Italian standards. Furthermore, I understand that the export of minced beef from this country has been blocked from entry into other countries. Will my right hon. Friend use his influence to open up those markets? I urge him to assure the House that he will take vigorous steps to sweep away those restrictions.

I should now like to refer to the problems facing farmers throughout Gloucestershire as a result of the policies put forward by the so-called alliance.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Not that again.

Mr. Marland: I see that the hon. Gentleman remembers that Gloucestershire county council passed a resolution to rate agricultural land. With the connivance of the Labour party, the alliance passed that resolution. That seems to be absolutely in line with alliance thinking. The alliance party wants to decentralise all decision making. In fact, the last time that I heard the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) speak, he discussed having a referendum to decide whether to introduce the community charge in Scotland. Therefore, what happened in Gloucestershire was dead in line with the alliance party's policy on local decision making.

However, what has happened? A directive has come down from the leader of the Social Democratic party advising alliance councillors to back off and say that they will not rate agricultural land. In Gloucestershire there has been a humiliating climbdown by the alliance which now will not rate agricultural land. I am glad that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland has returned to the Chamber because he can confirm whether local decision making is to be alliance policy. How can Gloucestershire farmers be sure that this policy will not be reintroduced?

Mr. Geraint Howells: I can assure Gloucestershire farmers that the alliance has no plans to rate agricultural land. To make the point even clearer, we have already had two apologies from Ministers who suggested that.

Mr. Marland: That is not the case in Gloucestershire because the councillors want to rate agricultural land and may do so if decision making is decentralised. I do not know whether the whole policy will change——

Mr. Gummer: I think I can help my hon. Friend. Farmers in Gloucestershire can be sure that before any election the alliance will not propose to rate agricultural land. After any election it is the traditional policy of the alliance to return to wanting to rate agricultural land.

Mr. Geraint Howells: The Minister has apologised once already.

Mr. Gummer: I have never apologised. I have only quoted the Liberal document that the policy was a tax on land. That was the policy of the Liberal party.

Mr. Marland: That is most helpful. The farmers of Gloucestershire have decided that this is wholly destabilising for their future and rather silly. They are not in the least surprised that the alliance parties have decided to star the Minister for silly walks in their party political broadcasts.

It is vital that our agriculture remains viable and that we do not spend money on storage but divert it to our farmers. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that United Kingdom farmers will receive the same treatment as those in other EEC countries, and will he ensure that fairness prevails for United Kingdom farmers in competition and restriction? Furthermore, will he help to open up so far blocked markets and seek to ensure that quota leasing is allowed to continue? Most of all, will he use his best endeavours to ensure a substantial devaluation of the green pound?

8.31 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): The hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) should be careful before entering into political knockabouts as he has just done, because my memory goes back 17 years. At that time he was pledging his undying loyalty to the Welsh mining valley constituency of Bedwellty and telling the residents that he wished to live among us and that he would make an admirable Member of Parliament to represent the coal and steel industries.

Mr. Marland: I well remember my days in Bedwellty when the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) used to give me a ferocious time from the front benches at meetings. Obviously, he still seeks to do so and I receive it in the spirit in which it is offered. I never offered to live in Bedwellty because I knew that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) was doing well. I had two or three supporters in Bedwellty who did not expect me to live with them. However, at the end of the election they said that I had done well and, indeed, I had done reasonably well, because I had cut the majority of the Leader of the Opposition from 22,500 to 22,300.

Mr. Davies: Some of us felt that the hon. Gentleman won more votes than he deserved.

During the Easter recess I read a book called "Countryside Conflicts", which stated:

"The British countryside tries to serve four masters. The public want it to provide adequate food and timber, to be a setting for active and passive recreation, to harbour wildlife and to look inspiringly beautiful. The farmers and foresters want it to be productive and wealth-creating. Developers expect it to be ready for engineering projects and buildings, and politicians want it to meet all of these objectives. The classic British way out is to compromise—to fudge and nudge over almost every hectare. This is no longer possible. The time has come to be clear about priorities and to guide land-use decisions accordingly."

That is a useful summary of the present position. I hope that the present difficulties—I hesitate to call them crises, because last time the Minister chastised me for that—present not only a challenge but an opportunity. I had hoped, but clearly I am to be disappointed, that the Government would take the opportunity to restructure not only our agricultural system but our whole pattern of land use to the great benefit of our natural environment. That opportunity has been missed.

There are two problems: over-production and surplus land, and obviously the two are interrelated. By the year 2000 we shall be faced with the prospect of taking between 3 million and 10 million acres of agricultural land out of production. Clearly, nothing that the Government have done during the past 12 months will go any way towards meeting that objective. In 1984, dairy quotas were introduced as one method of restraining production and my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) talked about the impact of that on our Welsh communities. On 10 March 1987 the ALURE proposals were introduced, and today the Minister explained the new European proposals on extensification. Both raise more questions than provide answers in regard to our natural environment.

As other hon. Members wish to speak I shall be brief and put three points to the Minister. First, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, presumably having discussed the ALURE package with his colleagues in the Department of the Environment, suggested that planning authorities would no longer have to give full consideration to the agricultural use of land on which development was proposed. A furore resulted from that and representations were made by Government Back Benchers to the DOE and MAFF. As a result, the proposals were somewhat modified.

I am a little mystified, because if the proposition was intended to remove agricultural land from agricultural production, why are the Government now saying, "There will be no wholescale development"? If the intention was to remove agricultural land from production, surely the Government presumed that large areas of land at present used for agriculture would be granted planning consent for residential, commercial or industrial purposes?

When the Minister replies to the debate I should like him to say what the Government's attitude is to development in the open countryside. Now that the agricultural requirement has been removed, do the Government place equal value on the planning objective of retaining the natural countryside? We hope that they will attempt to impose certain conditions on SSSIs and, indeed, on areas of outstanding natural beauty. I would not dare to suggest that the Government would envisage development there. Will they pay equal regard to areas of countryside which do not have any particular attraction other than that they are unspoilt areas of open countryside?

So far the Government have said that the planning controls will not be massively relaxed, and we are all aware of the impending general election. Will that attitude be reflected by the respective Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for the Environment when they come to resolve planning applications on appeal? I have a feeling that when the Secretary of State for Wales resolves planning applications for residential development in the open countryside he will have much more regard to his Government's wish to take agricultural land out of production than to the protection of open countryside. That matter causes me considerable anxiety.

My second point relates to the extensification proposals. Clearly, there will be a requirement to reduce production. We have heard about set-aside already today. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) took issue with the Minister earlier this afternoon and said that the Minister had spoken about the set-aside proposals, but we have seen no details and we do not know how they will work. The documents refer, as did the Minister, to taking 20 per cent. of land out of production.

I hope that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is not simply relying on fallowing. Some hon. Members who have spoken this afternoon have implied that that cereal land will simply be fallowed.

If that happens, we will cast a marvellous opportunity to one side. If the best that the Government can do in response to this problem of over-production is to declare that hundreds and thousands of acres of potentially productive farmland will be fallowed and presumably sprayed seasonally or periodically with herbicides or pesticides, a marvellous opportunity will be lost. That would be a gross affront, not only to the starving in this world, but to the taxpayers of this country and the conservation lobbies, which would criticise that abuse of our resources.

Will the extensification proposals apply to livestock? Is it intended that intensive beef and milk production will come within those proposals? Will the proposals apply to sheep production? If they do, I shall welcome them. The extensification of the beef, dairy and sheep sectors will have considerable benefits to those areas currently used for such production, but which are also important wildlife habitats. If it means that the concentration of the levels of sheep stocking in the Welsh uplands is reduced, that would be most welcome. I look forward to the Minister's response to those points.

Presumably, Ministers have at the back of their minds an awareness of the benefits that can accrue to wildlife habitat and conservation as a result of extensification programmes. Does the Minister propose to set up any formal or informal consultation with voluntary bodies? Will he consult the Nature Conservancy Council, the county trusts or the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds? There are important questions to ask about consultation. These questions will show whether the Government are serious in their desire to use this present crisis—which we all hope is temporary—to the overall benefit of our natural landscape.

My third point relates to forestry, and my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to this. The Government must consider several serious points and questions must be answered. In the 10 March proposals the Government said that they wanted a fairly substantial increase in what they described as "traditional forestry". I hope the Minister realises that there is a very hostile body of opinion against the further development of traditional forestry practices, especially if that is to take place in the threatened areas of Scotland or the upland areas of Wales which provide a unique landscape and wildlife habitat and which have been largely destroyed as a result of development since 1945.

If the objective is to help to reduce agricultural production, is it not self-evident that those planting operations should take place, not in marginal areas or the least productive areas, but "down the hill" in the more productive areas? If the Government accept that case—which I believe they do—what positive proposals will the Minister introduce to ensure that forestry takes place in the more productive areas, not in the least productive areas?

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman has taken a long-standing interest in afforestation in my constituency. Does he recognise that the economic returns on that forestry are comparable to those in Scandanavia? That forestry offers considerable and valuable employment locally, with the potential for even greater employment. Is he aware that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds recently reported that the damage to the natural habitat was much less than had been feared?

Mr. Davies: I do not believe that it is appropriate to follow that debate now. I am familiar with the hon. Gentleman's constituency and he is aware that my view differs from his. I gave way to the hon. Gentleman to allow him to put his points on the record. However, I do not want to explore that debate at the moment.

The Government's view is that the bulk of the afforestation will be carried out by the private sector. I have no doubt that the private sector will be driven to these operations on the cheapest land. That land will be the most marginal and the least productive. Operations will be largely financed either through direct Government subsidy or through tax concessions. It is absolutely indefensible, given the problems with afforestation at the moment, that there should be a further growth in afforestation in the least productive areas, when the need is to ensure more afforestation in the more productive areas "further down the hill".

The farm woodland scheme also needs far greater clarification than we have had thus far from the Government. Precisely how will the Government encourage planting in the more productive areas? Will that be a requirement? Will there be incentives or directives if producers are involved? I would be grateful to hear the Minister's observations on that point. I would also be grateful if the Minister could tell us how he proposes to consult. Will he consult the various conservation bodies on the location, design and the species content of those farm woodland schemes? If those schemes are to be of landscape value and of wildlife benefit — which the 10 March proposals state they should be — there must be a very considerable environmental input into the design and location of the schemes. Those are major questions which I hope the Government will address. I hope that some light will be shed on those points today.

There must be a recognition of the resentment, hostility and opposition to traditional forestry practices. There must be a recognition that opportunities are now presented which, if they are grasped, can go a long way towards taking the heat from the forestry argument. I have expressed my observations before to the Minister and his colleagues in the Scottish Office. They are aware of the concern that has been expressed from Opposition Members.

Now is not the time to be partisan. I know that the Minister and his colleagues share the concern expressed on the Opposition Benches about conservation. I know that that concern is genuine. I hope that the economic pressure now being exerted by the latest developments in agricultural policy will go some way towards ensuring that the concern expressed on the Conservative Benches and by Opposition Members is translated into a positive programme to enhance the environmental value of our countryside.

8.48 pm

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I bring to this debate none of the skills of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) or his depth of knowledge of agriculture. However, I bring some of the expertise of the shopkeeper. Agriculture is in a time of

[Mr. Tony Speller]

change whether we like it or not. As a Member representing a rural constituency, I do not like it. None the less, the change is here. A shopkeeper knows that sooner or later he must put in his shop the things that people are prepared to buy. Having said that, we must not allow to happen the kind of damage to our way of life in the countryside and the rural background that many hon. Members have referred to today. We cannot permit the devastation that has been seen in other parts of the country over the centuries when an industry has suffered change, such as the enclosures in Scotland way back or the changes in the steel and coal industries in more recent years.

I pledge myself completely to support farming with public money. We must say frankly to the public that we will protect the life represented by the smaller family farm. I have far less sympathy for the East Anglian baron, not because he is not an excellent farmer—I know that he is—but I am talking about the small man with the small farm in the small village with the small school, the small chapel and the small church. Those are the things that I, and I trust the party that I represent, are pledged to look after.

We can always obtain easy approbation by saying the nice gentle things. It is equally easy to get a fairly hard look when one speaks of the obvious economic things. For that reason, many hon. Members have perhaps wrapped up the parcel a little too much today.

At this moment agricultural production is surplus to requirements. One Chernobyl, one famine, one plague or one other problem and it would be as vital as ever it was in wartime. That is why we must have a viable and as nearly as possible self-sufficient agriculture within the Community. We can never guarantee that a crisis will never come again. There are sheep and lambs, although not, I am happy to say, in north Devon now, which are still damaged a year after the event at Chernobyl. We must always bear this in mind when the cry goes up that there is so much cheap food in the world, so why should we subsidise our farmers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) referred in passing to German beer and import restrictions. I approve greatly of the idea that beer should be pure, without additives. The German argument, which is relevant to agriculture, to hormone implants and all sorts of strange things, is that there is a good market for pure beer, German or otherwise, if it is made straight and without a pharmacopoeia of contents on the label on the package in the shop. Therefore, I was slightly surprised at what my hon. Friend said because it is quality that counts in the end.

My hon. Friend also commented in passing on farmers being farmers, not park keepers. In my constituency I have two prosperous park keepers who are farmers as well. I am not talking about parks and the man with the spiked stick, but about parkland that is an ornament of our countryside. It goes hand-in-hand with the form of extensive agriculture that we saw in years gone by and which, I suspect, we shall seek to encourage in years to come.

I speak as a retailer and shopkeeper, because I am aware that the British public like and will pay to enter parks. The British public will pay the top price for top quality food. It is true that we cannot export our sausage meat and if one looks at its contents one soon finds out why. Yesterday I visited Heal farm, King's Nympton, in my constituency, with my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning. It produces pure meat products without an additive in sight but barely enough even to satisfy one major supermarket, let alone the chain. Here is the demand, and it is a matter not of price but of quality. The person who sells on price alone goes out of business when someone else cuts the price just to take his business. Let us look to quality and purity and encourage what people will pay for. Look to the market place, but always accept the need to maintain the small farm in the rural environment.

In the last year I have travelled by chance on three American airlines. Each one serves for its teatime repast what it calls Devonshire scones and clotted cream. As a Devonian, I hate to admit that they all use the same Cornish cream, but how fascinating it is. Why are we not looking to the world market for products such as clotted cream which American — not British — airlines are serving? I do not press this too much, but it is worth saying that there is a world market place for excellence and that we are barely conscious of it.

Let me talk now of the major matters. It is easy to talk, and I have been gaining some smiles talking, of the minor matters. It is no secret that we are in the Community to stay. In my part of the world, not to stay in the Community—I have no great personal love for it—would remove so many jobs that the whole area would cease to be viable in both industry and agriculture.

An hon. Member spoke of the evils of not being self-sufficient and being over-protective about taking products from elsewhere. If people are to buy our lamb, we must buy something of theirs. We are talking about a market, not a battlefield.

Is it not time that we said that the CAP is, by general acceptance, a mess? No one argues against that. It is a battlefield as we make slightly snide remarks about part-time continental farmers and they make some fairly sharp remarks about some of our practices, and so it goes on. Is it not time that, while remaining in the Community, we thought about national support of agriculture along the lines that we agree nationally? There is little similarity between the highly efficient, full-time intensive farmer in Britain and the perhaps part-time farmer who may well run the garage, or village shop on the other side of the Channel.

It is worth considering that if we go on as we are, the EEC will break up sooner or later under the sheer weight of nonsense over debt, storage and surplus. There are easy jokes about giving the Russians butter for next to nothing. No shopkeeper would ever have gone along with such a system. Bankruptcy would have been the result. However, the state can never be allowed to go bankrupt, and so the nonsense continues.

I have only two more points. The first concerns quality. We must spend money to encourage quality and to find the markets in which we can sell. That is so simple and sensible, yet it is so hard to find money with our high-cost finance. One thing that might alone save our small farm would be some way of getting longer term, lower interest money. In my shop I can vary my prices and change the products in the fairly short term. That is not possible in agriculture and long-term, low-cost finance is probably the key to success. Many a good man has gone out of business because he could not bear the increasing interest debt which had nothing to do with his ability in husbandry.

Health food is often treated as a joke, but it is not. The contents of the fridge at home now are different from contents 10 years ago. I have little milk or butter in my fridge. The ladies of the family have quite different ideas about what is good to eat. Looking at me sideways, it is pretty obvious that I am fond of good Devonshire beef and Yorkshire pudding and other fine things, but public taste has changed, and in agriculture we must accept that. Why do we have to import so many of the herbs — the ordinary, simple herbs such as parsley, mint and borage —which feature in every restaurant meal? Why do we not think a little more about encouraging herb farms, deer and goat farms, goat cheeses and other specialities which other nations seem to specialise in? We could do much more through the Milk Marketing Board. I have always thought that the "marketing" part of that name is more interesting than factual.

Having mentioned lamb, I must mention milk. Of all the petty impositions the dairy inspection charge has to be the pettiest. If we are doing so well economically—and I believe that we are—must we add that last silly straw to our over-burdened dairy industry? A more successful outgoers scheme is our only real hope. It is fair to say that, unless we face the fact that the voluntary scheme has not been a success, we shall go along with little dribs and drabs of more restrictions on the small farmer. The big man can probably get away with it by varying his crops and getting capital, but the small man cannot do this easily.

Three points are important. There must be greater flexibility in the amount of quota that anybody can sell under an outgoers scheme. I do not understand why there has to be a limitation on it. If we interrupt logical trade, we interrupt the economy and make things less sensible. I do not know why payments cannot be made en bloc in one capital sum. Why must they be spread over a period of years? One needs money to reinvest and should be allowed to have it.

If it is to the benefit of the Community as a whole and our nation and the Exchequer in particular, the payment should be tax-free. I should have thought that if ever there was a case for allowing any capital sale to be tax-free, this is it. It would give capital to the farmer who is going out of milk production and enable him, without the problems of roll-over, to get into something else. It would at least give him some leeway. It is little use saying that we will give him so many per cent. over so many years if he needs the money now to invest in his next venture.

People talk about agriculture in terms of doom and gloom. I do not. I believe that we are at a turning point and that there are tremendous opportunities ahead. Many young farmers see this and will enjoy the challenge of the future. We must not tie them in European rope or British red tape.

8.59 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): It is a pleasure to follow my colleague and hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) from across the Tamar, particularly as he paid tribute to Cornish cream. If many farmers in my constituency had had the opportunity to be here today, they would have taken a lot of heart from the Minister's opening speech. Many of the points that he stressed that he would be fighting in the negotiations in Brussels are precisely those that the chairman of the Cornwall National Farmers Union has made in a letter to me and other hon. Members who represent Cornish constituencies, and I am grateful for that.

Reference was made to the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture, of which I am a member. In particular, there was passing reference to the Committee's report on New Zealand butter. Indeed, the subject was raised at Question Time. From remarks made at Question Time and during the debate, the Minister is probably aware that there is a change of mood on the Government Benches about the entry of New Zealand butter. I have come to the conclusion that, as our own farmers are having to face further cuts in quotas, it is only fair, right and equitable that New Zealand imports — not guaranteed sales — should be cut at least to the same proportion. I hope that the Minister will take note of that.

The Select Committee's report stated:

"We believe that the UK dairy trade would serve our farmers better if it were to learn to market its product as well as the Dutch, Danish or New Zealand exporters, but the heart of the problem is that 90,000 tonnes of butter were produced for intervention alone last year rather than for sale on the commercial market. The system is wrong and must be changed."

It is a tremendous blot on the working of the common agricultural policy that so much butter was produced in this country, not for sale, but to go straight into intervention store. No doubt the Milk Marketing Board can say that that is the way in which the system works and that it pays us to do it, but it is utterly wrong and must be changed. No one in this country can say that we do not contribute to surpluses while that situation goes on. I hope that the system is changed so that the problem is dealt with.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Minister of State for the introduction of environmentally sensitive areas and also for designating West Penwith in my constituency as one of the first of them. I am also grateful for the fact that now that the talks have started on the implementation and working out of the scheme, my right hon. Friends have shown sensible flexibility in dealing with the real points of concern put forward by environmentalists and farmers. There were fears that, because the scheme seemed to be likely to operate, fences would go up. That is contrary to the spirit of the ESA scheme. I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend's have been flexible and that that is no longer a danger.

Will my right hon. Friend the Minister speed up the details of the diversification programme? There is tremendous interest in diversification, particularly the marketing aspects. The Cornwall Marketing Group has great plans for developing the processing of foodstufs in Cornwall so that we get added value. Looking at the details of this scheme would be of great help in achieving that. May we have the details as quickly as possible?

9.4 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): In some respects this is a sad debate. It is sad not only because we are saying farewell to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) but because we are also saying farewell to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard), who, apart from her other achievements, has been my pair. I hope that she will remember the importance of the rules of succession when she leaves us. It is also sad that the hon. Member for Caithness and

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) seems actually to believe in the alliance farm policy, which is so manifestly incredible that the president of the National Farmers Union has said that it would annihilate United Kingdom farming; that it would rip it apart.

This is also a sad occasion because, as a result of its distance from the farming industry the Labour party, however interesting some of its thoughts might be on this or that, seems blissfully unaware that its general policy of increasing inflation will drive up farm prices. The Opposition would also increase nationalisation and that would threaten land. They would increase borrowing, which would drive up farm interest rates, and they would rate agricultural land. *[Interruption.]* Those things so appal farmers that I do not think any farmer in the country will vote for them and I shall be left without a pair.

I should like to pass on some points that were raised with me when recently visiting farms in my constituency. First, sadly, there is a widespread lack of appreciation, not so much of the enormous problems facing my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Brussels, such as the cereal surplus, which will have risen from 3·5 million tonnes in 1981 to almost 100 million tonnes in a few years time, as of his substantial achievements. There is the variable beef premium, the lesser fall in the level of beef support compared to West Germany, the 6 per cent. green pound devaluation for beef, and his victory on the co-responsibility levy for cereal producers.

Clearly, we still have a most important public relations job to perform and charging £8·50 for the Farming and Rural Enterprise pack will not help very much, because I cannot afford to send it to my farmers, and they cannot afford to buy it. I hope that my right hon. Friend and his team will get round as many constituencies as possible, because he achieved a signal success when he came to Burton.

Secondly, the most constant message that I received when I went round was the farmers' fear of uncertainty, and particularly the uncertainty for young farmers who want to come into farming and are fearful of doing so. Because of the weather, disease and consumer fickleness farming is always uncertain. When farmers were encouraged to expand milk production and then had the door slammed on them, their confidence was greatly shaken. There is a hope that the lessons painfully learnt from the milk cuts will not need to be relearnt in relation to cereals or pigs or any other area of over-production. The outgoers scheme, for example, has only encouraged milk farmers to buy into quota and to transfer their quota, but a 27p price at the start might have encouraged more of them to go out of production.

Thirdly, the next message that I received was about the apparent unfairness of the operation of the common agricultural policy between member states. There were cuts which seemed to our farmers to be bigger for us than for others. There is a falling of British farm incomes compared to farm incomes in other countries in the Community. We also saw 30 million litres of quota given to the Irish, who produce only 20 per cent. of what we produce. We have seen large subventions to Portugal to produce milk, the production of which we are trying to restrain. Other examples have been mentioned in the debate.

Some of the concern is rather misplaced. It is not unfair that so much Danish bacon or New Zealand butter is sold here. That happens because we do not market our produce attractively enough for the housewife. That is not the Government's fault, it is the industry's fault, and the sooner that it looks to it the better.

My farmers also raised with me points about charges that start with hygiene visits but could go on into other fields of untapped resources that might well gladden the heart of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. These are dairy inspection, artificial insemination flask inspection, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food service charges, spray licences, health and safety checks, footpath restoration, pollution control licences, TB licences, and brucellosis licences. My farmers say that all these matters could be the subject of future charges. If my right hon. Friend can reassure me that no further charges are in the pipeline, that will be very reassuring for my constituents.

I have heard about the burdens that are about to be imposed on farmers by the medical recording requirements of the National Office of Animal Health. One of my farms, a managed farm of some 1,200 acreas with 800 head of livestock and 10 employees, has worked out that by the time it has dealt with worming, estromating, warbling, pneumovaccines, and so on, at five minutes per insertion and 7,000 insertions a year, it will use up 50 books, taking 580 hours at five minutes for each entry. That is 2·25 hours a day of a five-day week. I hope that my right hon. Friend will look again at the absurdity of such requirements and will take into account the fact that while elsewhere in industry the Conservative party is reducing the burdens of bureaucracy, we seem to be increasing them for farmers.

My farmers have raised with me the absolute necessity of a devaluation in the green pound. Everyone else has already spoken about that, so I only add my voice.

Farmers are concerned also that the British public should not look upon them as the destroyers of the environment, when precisely the opposite is the case. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who represent farming constituencies should make it clear to our urban constituents at every opportunity just how much is owed to the farming community for its preservation of our rural environment.

Finally, I have noticed precious little disaffection in my constituency from the farming community — much as Opposition Members might desperately pray for such an unlikely occurrence. On the contrary, in 13 years of representing the 300 and more farms in the Burton and Uttoxeter area, I have never seen so many farms that are well stocked, well maintained, well run, bright, cheerful and prosperous-looking. I hope that it will not be long before they are all like that. That is a tribute not only to the energy, dedication and skills of Burton farmers — fortified as they are by Burton beer — but to my right hon. Friend, his predecessor my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) and the Government farming team for their success in damage limitation in Brussels, their positive achievement and — in an area where there are many farm tenancies — the particular boon in helping tenancies to be passed on to successors within the family.

I have no doubt that, when the election comes, the farmers of Burton — and elsewhere — will remember who their true friends are.

9.12 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): We have heard an intriguing little speechette from the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). I suspect that when the election comes he will want to go to those farmers and say, "I raised the problem of dairy and ADAS charges on your behalf, and you can rely on me." However, the hon. and learned Gentleman quite cheerfully voted for all those charges. Like so many Conservative Members, he wants to have it both ways.

During this debate, we have heard three important and rather sad swan songs. First, my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) has represented his farming constituents assiduously throughout his career here, and he will certainly be missed in the House. I wish him well. As for the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills), much has been said about him during the debate. His deep commitment to the farming industry is well known, as is his deep and abiding loyalty to his party and to the Minister — and rightly so. The hon. Gentleman made a characteristic speech today. I should love to have been a fly on the wall yesterday, when I gather that he led a deputation from the Conservative Back-Bench agriculture committee to meet the Prime Minister. I hope that he was a little more forthright then than he has been in this debate.

Finally, I turn to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard), who, sadly, is not with us at the moment. When she leaves the House, the country's farm workers will have lost a powerful advocate in the House. I am sure that we all wish her well for the future.

The farm workers and the farmers of this country have a tremendous record of hard work and commitment to their industry and to the countryside. As this debate ends, many shepherds, whether employees or farmers themselves, will be facing a long night looking after their ewes and lambs, and long before we think of getting up tomorrow morning they will be milking their cows. The dedication that is required by those who work in this industry is probably unparalleled. If private sector investment in the farming industry had been reflected in private sector investment in other British industries, our economy might not be where it is today. The farming industry has responded spectacularly to the incentives that have been provided for it by successive Governments and the European Community, but, for its pains, the industry now faces a grave crisis.

We cannot necessarily blame the industry for responding to incentives. However, we can blame the Government and the European Community for failing to adjust policies in time to avoid the present crisis. The farming industry and the rural areas that depend upon it will have to undertake major changes of course, but we are still waiting for the authorities to address themselves to the relevant questions, let alone take the relevant decisions.

The debate has highlighted the scale of the crisis that faces the industry. Despite last year's recovery from the disaster of 1985, farming incomes are at their second lowest level since the second world war. The average level of farm incomes between 1984 and 1986 was about 40 per cent. down on what it was between 1973 and 1975, much of that period being under a Labour Government. I suspect that the farming industry will recall that over the years Labour Governments have served the industry well. It would do well to compare the Labour party's record with that of the Conservative party.

Against that background, it is not surprising that even more jobs are being lost. Last year, full-time employment on British farms fell by 9,000. That was very serious for the rural economy. The indebtedness of farmers is increasing alarmingly, and investment by farmers is at its lowest level for 30 years. That has a very serious knock-on effect for the ancillary industries in the rural economy.

The paradox is that, while farm incomes are collapsing, the costs of agricultural support are soaring. They now amount to £2·5 billion. Spending by the intervention board for agricultural produce stands at £1·1 billion. The problem is that the common agricultural policy is not working. It is a fabulously expensive device that encourages farmers to produce vast quantities of food, but we then go to great lengths to deter people from eating that food.

As for intervention stocks, the intervention board in Britain is the proud owner of 48,000 tonnes of beef, 275,000 tonnes of butter and skimméd milk powder and 3,806 million tonnes of cereals. Over 4 million tonnes of food are in store, yet the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) tells us that we should be careful and that we should not run down our stocks too far. There is no fear of that.

It is also worth pointing out that those stocks would have been far greater had there not been such a disastrous harvest last year in Spain. The Minister referred to the fact that by 1993 intervention stocks will probably amount to 100 million tonnes. For too many farmers, intervention has become the market. Farmers have lost sight of the market to which they are meant to be selling and for which they are supposed to be producing. They are producing foodstuffs that go into intervention stores and they cheerfully forget about what happens to them next.

The only way to get rid of those stocks appears to be either to pay the Russians to take it away or to ask the Salvation Army or the Women's Royal Voluntary Service to give it away, a point that was referred to by my hon. Friends the Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) and by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas). They referred to the proper concern about the burden that that exercise imposes on the voluntary organisations. I note that they had to pay for the distribution of food from the intervention stores. I wonder whether the same conditions are applied to the Soviet Union. Will it come to the intervention stores to take the stuff away or will the food be provided for it at cut-price levels, free on board ships, or whatever other means of transport may be used?

There are two fundamental problems. We have a seriously depressed and distorted farming industry and we have runaway expenditure on a failed support mechanism. Everyone knows that something drastic will have to be done. What have the Commission and the Government done? They are not so much fiddling while Rome burns as tinkering while Rome is buried in food surpluses.

In fairness, I acknowledge that the Commission and the Government acted to contain milk surpluses by establishing a quota system back in 1984. However, the Minister covered himself with glory — as ever — by ensuring that the British dairy sector got the worst possible deal on that occasion. He accepted a singularly inappropriate base year — 1981 — for the quota

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

calculations. He also failed to take account of New Zealand, a matter to which a number of Conservative hon. Members have referred.

The position has been compounded and aggravated, year after year, by each subsequent quota cut. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) referred to the effect on some remote creameries, which will find themselves without enough milk supplies to keep going. I recently had the privilege of meeting representatives from a National Farmers Union branch in his constituency on the Isle of Arran. I can assure him that he cannot expect to escape his share of the responsibility for what is happening to agricultural policy — *[Interruption.]* The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland and the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West must contain themselves. The Minister has actually bought a copy of our green paper, which I shall summarise in a moment.

The quotas in the milk sector have pushed farmers into producing more of the other crops that are already in surplus—beef and cereals—and now there is a genuine fear that the sheep sector might be on the point of producing surpluses, too. That is certainly not a satisfactory position.

As we travel around our constituencies through the countryside this weekend, we can look at the amount of cereal planting this year—all those nice green acres. The acreage of cereals that has been planted this year is about the same as last year. It is unlikely that the Spanish harvest will fail again, so all those lovely green acres will probably be translated into record cereal stocks and another CAP crisis in a few months' time. The hon. Member for Honiton mentioned that point in his speech.

What is the European Council doing? On 1 April, the Minister replied, rather propitiously, to a parliamentary question:

"The council had a first discussion of the Commission's proposals for agricultural support prices and arrangements for 1987-88. No decisions were reached on these proposals, and the Council will take them up again at its next meeting on 27 April. The marketing years for beef and dairy products, which otherwise would have expired, were therefore extended until 31 May."—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1987; Vol. 113, c. *542*.]

The show must go on.

Today the Minister has further elaborated his position, but there has been more than enough talk already. The time must have come for decisions. All those timid gestures about environmentally sensitive areas diversification, new crops and farm woodlands are all very well, but nothing significant is happening to deal with the problems. There is a full-scale budgetary crisis and there are growing symptoms of panic in the industry. The European Council of Ministers is still only talking about the problem.

Our Minister is pursuing his inimitable career, having undermined the operation of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service at the very time when the industry has greatest need of guidance. He kicked the dairy sector when it was still reeling from the effects of the quota clamp down by imposing a £90 charge for statutory dairy inspections. That will not be forgotten in rural areas. If anyone doubts that, let him read the farming press. When the Minister read it a few months ago he knew that he was in for a rough time at the NFU annual general meeting. Thus we had the great media events of 9 February and 10 March.

As you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was high drama. It started with open conflict between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There was then the hastily prepared statement of 9 February with the launch, a month later, of a glossy brochure full of pretty prose and even prettier pictures, of my constituency among other places, and a fanfare about a £25 million package that was supposedly intended to deal with a £2·5 billion problem. That obviously did not measure up to the job and, not surprisingly the National Farmers Union duly passed its motion of no confidence in the Minister.

The Minister spoke again today about the 10 March ALURE package. He knows of the massive opposition in the House and the country to the idea of a general relaxation of planning controls, the idea of giving free rein to speculative development in the countryside. I sincerely hope that he has got the message on that.

We certainly support a number of other aspects of the ALURE package. Credit where credit is due to the Minister on that matter. We support the increased back-up that there is to be for the less favoured areas. We support the farm and countryside initiative and the extension of ths scope of the agricultural training board. However, we wish that there was sufficient money to make all those things work. It is not good enough just to make it possible for the Industrial Training Board and other organisations to do those things. They require the wherewithal to make it possible.

We support the diversification incentives in principle and we support the incentives for extensive farming, marketing and environmentally sensitive areas. In fact, we would go further on the matter of farm woodlands. We claim credit for leading the debate on the need to expand farm woodlands in Britain. Our complaint on all those matters is simply that the package is far too little, far too late. The Ministry has been able to achieve a total of £25 million. If we discount the £8 million of tree planting grant that will be available anyway and the administrative costs, there is apparently only £17 million of new money in the package. That falls far short of what is required.

The current incentives for planting trees on low ground farms are obviously not meeting present targets, so what prospects are there of the new scheme having any significant impact? The hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) said that incentives of £125 per hectare are not likely to attract many low ground farmers to plant trees. The package fails to measure up to the problems.

The Minister spoke about the urgent need to control cereal production, but nothing is being done about it. The industry knows that something drastic will happen and it is entitled to expect decisions to be made by politicians. That is supposed to be our job.

I shall now deal with the Commission's proposals which are on the table. The Minister rightly dismissed the proposed restrictions on the ewe premium and salted butter as being discriminatory against the United Kingdom. He has the support of the whole House on that. The Commission's present proposals would rely heavily on the proposed oils and fats tax. That does not make sense. The Minister said that, and the whole House agrees with him.

Those proposals must be strongly resisted, and it has to be said that only the European Commission could come up with a proposal to deal with the problem of stocks of expensive butter by forcing up the price of margarine. It

will have no impact on the butter mountain if we force up the price of a 500g pack of Stork from 31p to 41p and it will do no good to force up the price of some cooking oils by as much as 90 per cent.

I wish sometimes that some of those people would consider the fact that the people of Europe might like to eat some more of those food commodities that they cannot afford at present, although they pay for them through the nose in taxes because of the way in which the CAP is working. Beef is a good example. Has it ever occurred to the Commission that an extension of the beef variable premium to make beef cheaper in the shops would probably cut the cost of intervention? It would encourage beef production and therefore there would be a bigger acreage of grass and greater consumption of feeding cereals. There would probably be a lower production of feeding cereals because it would displace land that is currently being used for growing cereals. Such a course would probably solve many of the problems we are taking about today. It would also allow our people to enjoy more red meat, which would not necessarily do them any harm.

I have three further points relevant to the beef sector. First, will the Minister take this opportunity to tell us more about the famous 435 million ecu which he said were available to help to dispose of beef from the culling of dairy cows? He has said on a number of occasions that that sum exists, but where is it? What budget does it appear in? Is it in a sleazy slush fund somewhere in the EEC? It would have to be quite a big slush fund. It does not appear in any of the published accounts. I will accept that it exists, but when and how will the sum be deployed to meet the need?

Secondly, we recognise the anxiety of producers about unfair competition from Ireland and support the call for an adjustment of the green pound to protect the competitive position of British Beef in the market place.

Thirdly, will the Minister tell us something about hill livestock compensatory allowances? Is he prepared to take them up to the permitted ceiling to help our less favoured areas?

We have been pressed to talk about the Labour party's ideas for agriculture. Our green paper was widely read and acknowledged as a serious approach to the future of the industry by those who replied to our representations. We start from the premise that it is most unlikely that there will ever be a comprehensive detailed agricultural policy appropriate to every part of the European Community from Caithness to Crete. The time has come for the Council of Ministers to face up to that problem and to consider repatriating national aspects of agricultural policy. The European Community would still be able to set its prices and national production targets, but national Governments, who surely must know best in their areas, would be able to deal with the national application of those policies.

For Britain, we see no fair alternative to a quota system covering the main commodities. We reject strongly the Tory idea of regulating production by price — that means Government by bankruptcy—and we also reject the idea of a two-tier pricing system, which simply does not seem appropriate to the United Kingdom. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has put forward a proposal for a two-tier pricing system which I understand would involve a cut-off point at 140 tonnes of cereals.

Mr. Geraint Howells: The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House again.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to speak earlier and the right hon. Member for Devonport is on the record as saying that in the Bledisloe lecture. It would discriminate against the vast majority of British farmers because it would affect anyone with more than 50 acres of cereal, which applies to many British farmers.

We recognise that all this points to the need for new uses for farm land. We propose substantial incentives for new land uses and have put forward far more extensive proposals than those of the Government. We are prepared to make the resources available because it is necessary and in the long run will save money. We suggest that 1 million hectares should be planted in trees in the course of 20 years, and we would provide more direct aid for small farms and environmentally sensitive areas.

We would establish a land bank to release land to let to young farmers. We have put forward the idea of a department of rural affairs to co-ordinate policies across the board in rural Britain and to undo some of the damage done to the rural community by this Government. Finally, we have pledged ourselves to publish a White Paper to give clear guidance to this important industry within a year of coming to office—something that the Government have resolutely refused to do since they came to power in 1979.

Sir Peter Mills: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Home Robertson: No. the Minister wishes to speak.

I should like to press the Minister of State to respond to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) about value added tax on food. The silence of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on this point was deafening. This serious point must be dealt with by an Agriculture Minister during this debate.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food concluded by referring to what he described as "a healthy rural economy" based on strong agriculture. That is not a picture that many of us recognise. As I travel around rural Britain, I see a devastated rural economy with a shell-shocked agriculture. The Government have failed shamefully. Rural Britain should take account of the siren voices of the free market fanatics of the Tory party, who would cheerfully do to agriculture what they have already done to the coal and steel industries.

The Conservative party always poses as the party of rural Britain, but I suggest that it is a party that over the years has shamelessly ridden on the back of rural Britain and has got away with it for far too long. In the coming weeks, the people of rural Britain will have an opportunity to look at the Labour party's ideas for regeneration of their communities. I sincerely hope that rural Britain will play its part whenever the general election takes place, in dismissing the Tory Government.

9.35 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): It is clear that if, over the next few weeks, the people of Britain want to know what the Labour party's policy is, they will have to pay £1. They certainly will not discover it from any statement made by Labour Members. It was all very well for the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home

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Robertson) to comment on the way in which the quotas for Britain were established. They were established in such a way that 44 per cent. of quota cuts in Europe were bigger than in Britain and 44 per cent. were smaller. We obtained a very good deal. The deal did not take account of New Zealand. Thank goodness it did not because, if it had, our quota would have been cut. That would have been the only way in which account could have been taken of New Zealand. The hon. Member for East Lothian has misled the House in the way in which he presented that case, and he should not have done so.

We started the debate with some points on which we all agreed, and it is right to repeat them. We shall miss the three hon. Members who are not likely to speak again in an agriculture debate. I add my tribute to the hon. Members for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) and for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard). I hope that the hon. Member for Brightside is pleased that the tributes paid to her have come from both sides of the House. Although we have often argued strongly with each other, and although the hon. Lady's views are deeply opposed to those for which I stand, we all acknowledge her considerable integrity in putting forward those views. She has a delightful way of putting them toughly and at the same time charmingly. In so doing she has caused many of us to think about matters in a way foreign to us.

Few hon. Members would fail to say that we have always learnt from what my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) has said. We have always recognised that he speaks from the sincerity that comes from a long attachment to agriculture and the sincerity that comes from someone who stands up for what he believes and speaks so clearly and with an honesty that is remarkable in politics.

I was pleased to note at the beginning of the debate that we agreed that certain measures in the package were unacceptable to Britain. I have just returned—in some ways rather more precipitately than I had hoped—from west Africa. I believe that the House has a duty to bring home to people the severe effects on the poorest in the world of the oils and fats tax. I hope that I carry the House with me when I say that I can think of few things more immoral than taxing the products of the poorest to use the money to subsidise the exports of the richest to the very countries that have been taxed in order to undercut in their markets the products that they can no longer sell to their people. That is what an oils and fats tax does.

I came back from the Cameroons appalled by the fact that the Prime Minister of France, having been there and having stated how much he supported the developing nations in having a voice for Africa in the Community, seemed not to understand that his own Agriculture Minister was at that point supporting the oil and fats tax, which is the most damaging thing that has been proposed to developing countries by the Community for many years. I hope that we in this country will not press it because of our home population's pockets. I hope we will insist that there is a moral duty on those who are rich not so to distort the market and tax the products of the poor that we find ourselves living on their backs. That is wholly unacceptable.

It is odd that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) should have said how strongly he was against the suggested figure—a sort of top limit — on the new premium, because that is precisely the two-tier system. That is to say, one gives to certain farms more than to other farms. Why he should have got on his high horse when that was the whole basis of it, I do not know. I find it unacceptable and despicable that the alliance puts forward its policies so as to appeal to whichever parts of the electorate it is addressing.

Those policies have little to do with principle, and very little to do with continued principle. That is the reason for the old alliance between the two other parties. The reason why the hon. Gentleman finds the two other parties so often on the same side over individual policies of the alliance is that both parties have the honesty to realise that the policies should cover the whole nation and be capable of implementation were they to be in office, whereas the alliance holds no restriction, moral impediment or practical restraint.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) put forward a number of points and, on the question of the free food scheme, asked whether we had done better than any other country. Combining butter and beef, the total EEC distribution was 17,500 tonnes. The United Kingdom distributed 7,400 tonnes. The next largest distributors were Germany, with 4,400 tonnes, France with 3,200, Ireland with 1,400, Spain with 900, and Italy with 200. It is true that we did not distribute more of every product—I do not think I ever claimed that; after all, there were some products which we did not distribute at all — but of those products that we did distribute, we distributed considerably more than other countries.

Those are the figures. We ought to congratulate the various charities on the great work that they did. I say to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) in absentia—he honourably said that he would be unable to be here for the winding-up speeches — that certain charities found it more difficult to use their particular organisation than did others—but most of the charities found that, on balance, the opportunities given greatly outweighed the disadvantages.

I say to the hon. Member for East Lothian that it is not true that charities had to pay the cost of moving the goods from intervention stores. They had to pay the cost from the distribution points which they nominated. That is precisely what the Russians have to do, although the comparison is entirely odious and unacceptable.

The balanced way in which my hon Friend the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West presented his points was an excellent example of how this debate ought to be conducted. The House will agree with his assessment of the importance of the beef industry and with his concern about the present situation. I assure him that in the negotiations that will now take place we will bear those points in mind, because they must be put clearly to the Commission. The beef industry is an important supporter of many rural areas which have little else to do or to turn to.

I have to say something about the speech of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, if only because it was very long, or seemed very long. *[Interruption.]* Well, it seemed an extremely long speech. It was with exquisite courtesy that the hon. Gentleman refused to give way to me, having attacked me on an individual issue. This has added point to the long-standing rumour that of all the defectors to the Social Democratic party, the hon. Gentleman is the only one that the Labour party asked to leave. One can understand why.

If there is a way in which the hon. Gentleman can get the wrong end of the stick, he will take it. What is more, he goes on and on about it and never gives way to anyone who might be able to put him right. I have refused to give way to him recently because he has refused on every occasion to give way during his speeches. Having made his speech, he leaves the Chamber, leaving everyone else to continue the debate, to return only to listen to those who share his views, the other alliance members. I understand why he does that. Perhaps they do not share his views. Perhaps he returns to the Chamber to listen to their views to check whether they are the same as his.

That is the problem with the alliance, and the House must not be misled by alliance policies. I intend to repeat clearly what they are, which will leave the House with a wide range of policies from which to choose. The hon. for Caithness and Sutherland cannot tell us with his air of injured innocence that we are misleading the House by referring to the speech of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) because I shall make reference only to his speech. The only person who can mislead the House on that score is the right hon. Gentleman. I am not quoting the glosses of the speech that appeared when the figures had been worked out. I am not quoting the defence of it after Simon Gourlay pointed to the nonsense of it. I am not quoting the revised version from the new translations which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland presented to the National Farmers Union. Instead, I shall quote the speech.

There is a clear reference to 140 tonnes, which means that the producers of 80 per cent. of Britain's grain would receive world prices, while 80 per cent. of the producers of grain in the rest of the Community would receive Community prices. That means that the price of reforming the agricultural policy on cereals would be borne almost entirely by British farmers, and almost not at all by the farmers of the rest of the Community. That is why that policy is unpatriotic as well as being damnably bad.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland has expounded a new policy. It is not quite as damaging as its predecessor, because it is rather more difficult to understand, which means that some may not consider it to be as damaging. The hon. Gentleman says that each country would be able to produce as much grain as it needed and would be able to ensure that it was shared among farmers as it thought fit.

What does that mean? It means that the two countries that produce the surplus grain would be the countries whose farmers would pay for the reform of the cereal regime, whereas all countries would bear the cost of the reform of all the other regimes. That means that the entire cost of the cereal regime reform under the David Owen plan would be borne by Britain, but under the Maclennan plan it would be borne by Britain and France. That is very lucky! It is probably the same thing as the joint nuclear deterrent—we shall do it together. However, the cost will be the British farmers' cost. The hon. Gentleman must not tell the House otherwise, because that is what his figures mean.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is not the only alliance spokesman. I have been lucky enough to find another one. I have received a letter from Mr. Gerald Tatton Brown, who claims to be the alliance candidate in the Honiton division. I do not expect that we shall hear much of him after the election,but at the moment he is writing to everyone.

What does Mr. Tatton Brown say? He says that there will be a three-tier system. There will be not one tier, not two, but three. What else will he have? He will support the 500-lamb proposal, something which we have heard denied during the debate. It seems that if the Commission proposes that policy the alliance is against it, and that if Mr. Tatton Brown wants it, it is for it. Why should that be? Could it be that most of the farmers in his constituency have fewer than 500 lambs? Could it be that he hopes that people with larger flocks will not have heard of Mr. Tatton Brown? Could it possibly be that once again it is a policy per constituency, indeed a policy per ward? And it is not just the policy; it is the facts.

We found on Sunday that the Liberals not only have a policy for every constituency but have a poll result from every constituency. The hon. Member Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes)——

Mr. Livsey: Would the right hon. Gentleman please stick to the debate, which is about the EC pricing policy?

Mr. Speaker: Every hon. Member makes his own speech. I imagine that there is some farming in Bermondsey, is there?

Mr. Gummer: I would not have mentioned Bermondsey had it not been for the fact that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is the spokesman on the environment for the alliance. He may have been sacked —it is very difficult to keep track—but he was the spokesman at one stage when the Liberals announced their environmental policy. I see that it is the Liberals, not the alliance, for which he is the spokesman, but I remind the House that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland explained to the National Farmers Union how convenient it was to belong to an alliance because it meant that there were two policies on everything and one could decide which one one supported at any particular time.

Now we have a poll which turns out, supposedly, to have been leaked and which turns out not to have been produced. The fact that it happened to show the alliance ahead in London explains why it was brought up in the first place. The poll is about as true as the hon. Gentleman's policy and is based upon an assessment of the facts which is as about as true as the hon. Gentleman's inability to distinguish between my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) and my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary. The hon. Gentleman's eyesight is as defective as his knowledge of the facts.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that we were not standing up for Britain in what we did on the co-responsibility levy for cereals. The proposal put before us by the Commission would have meant that German farmers escaped any kind of levy on all but 18 per cent. of their production and that Britain paid the levy on 80 per cent. of its production. By the time we finished, Britain and Germany paid the levy on about the same amount.

What the alliance wants to do is to disadvantage Britain. Every part of its policy is designed to disadvantage this country. Yet its members have the effrontery to come here and attack the Government as the hon. Gentleman has done in this debate by refusing to give way to anybody and then not dividing the House. Having been as insulting as that to the Government and having said that everything is wrong, will the hon. Gentleman vote against what is proposed? No. He can be as smugly insulting as he likes,

[Mr. Gummer]

but in the end he knows that the truth is that the Conservative party has at least put forward the policies on which it stands.

I must say to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside that I do not believe that the nationalisation of land would help to achieve the aims that she has in view. I know she believes that it would, but that is not the experience of any other country that has nationalised land. I do not think that the Soviet Union would say that it has been a magnificent success. I do not believe that that is the way forward.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) that we are spending far too much on storage and dispersal. It would be very much better if we spent that money on farming and got more of it back into the farmers' pockets. That surely is what we ought to be aiming to do.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow made his usual serious contribution to the debate. On the question of the oils and fats tax, I hope that he will underline the big impact that it would have, not just on our trade with the United States, but on our trade with the developing countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) put forward a strong view about New Zealand. I was attacked very strongly by the Prime Minister of New Zealand because I mentioned that the New Zealand position on defence cannot help the attitude towards his country. I remind my hon. Friend that that is the position of the New Zealand Government, not necessarily that of the New Zealand people, and that we have certain long-standing obligations.

I say to my hon. Friend that I would find that argument easier to bear if we were selling competitively against New Zealand. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) was right to remind us that New Zealand does not have a guaranteed market in Britain; that it has an opportunity market. We have not yet been successful enough in selling our own products against theirs. The word "marketing" is the most important word in the name Milk Marketing Board. It is an important word and one that I hope will increasingly be underlined.

It is wrong for the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) to suggest that Chernobyl had the effect that it did, without recognising the considerable way in which the Government have aided those farmers who have suffered. That is whingeing a little. There is no doubt that we have been more generous and responded more rapidly and more extensively than any other Government. It is right to say that, because many townsfolk find it difficult to understand why we did it. We know why, but we should say "thank you" occasionally on such matters.

I agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), who put several points very clearly. However, I am a little alarmed by her view on New Zealand, because I believe that we have a special responsibility there. I warn Opposition Members that they were the people who insisted that we had not just a temporary agreement, but one that was a continuing acceptance of a continuing responsibility. The truth is that the amount of butter coming in from New Zealand has halved since we joined the European Community. Our production of butter has increased from supplying 20 per cent. to 50 per cent. That is a big change round.

We must realise that we have pushed out of our market large quantities of butter that came from the rest of the Community. What is more, we have put a great deal of butter into intervention. As my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives said, it is not possible to argue with our friends in the European Community that somehow or other we do not contribute to the surpluses when we put 90,000 tonnes of butter into intervention. We should not try to push that argument too hard.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside was one of those hon. Members who were guilty of saying, "We are not self-sufficient; surely we should be on our own." That is a little odd coming from the internationalist party. However, the fact is that the hon. Lady is not right in saying that, because in many things we are much more than self-sufficient. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) was right to say that in the end we are in the business of trade. We are now one of the world's great agricultural exporters. One cannot expect to export without importing. The Community must learn that as much as anybody else, and must learn it about the developing as well as about the developed countries.

Britain would not be true to herself if she started to become a protectionist nation and would lose out considerably. Britain should demand fair dos for her own exports in other people's markets. I have much more sympathy with the points that have been raised by my hon. Friends, not least by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) who demanded that we have fair exports and that we should go down that route and not the route of protectionism.

I agree with much of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). His explanation of the green pound structure and of the problems that that causes British agriculture was extremely helpful. I have some specific answers on his points about the outgoers scheme. What he adumbrated was mostly right, but I should like to reply to him in detail in writing.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) worries me. I asked him what it was about our joining the ERM — the exchange rate mechanism — that would decrease interest rates by 2 per cent. The House must agree that answer came there none. In fact, he looked more puzzled about the question than I did about the answer. That is difficult, because his answer was inconceivable, so I do not know what his question must have been about. Therefore, I ask him again, before he trots out easy economic answers to difficult economic problems, to do his homework and come here with a better answer.

I liked what my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) said about the problems facing agriculture. However, I ask him to consider carefully before attacking the health regulations of other countries. We are concerned to make sure that our health regulations are careful. The one to which he referred, relating to minced beef, may not sound important, but it is crucial for the protection of health in this country. Therefore, I ask him to look more carefully at that.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend raised the matter of rating agricultural land. It is no good alliance Members pretending that they do not want to tax agricultural land when it is clear from last year's document, called "These

are Liberal Policies", that there shall be a tax on such land. I do not know whether that is Liberal policy now, but it was last year. It was Liberal policy until the right hon. Member for Devonport said that it was not. Therefore, we know precisely who the leader of the Liberal party is today.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

CHEVENING ESTATE BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90 (Second Reading Committees). That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of seven Members, four to be nominated by the House and three by the Committee of Selection.

Ordered,

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than the seventh day after this day, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the said Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents.

Ordered,

That if no such Petition as is mentioned in sub-paragraph *(a)* above is presented, or if all such petitions are withdrawn before the meeting of the Committee, the order for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee shall be discharged and the Bill shall be committed to a Standing Committee.

Ordered,

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition.

Ordered,

That the Committee have power to report from day to day the Minutes of the Evidence taken before it.

Ordered,

That three be the Quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Personal Taxation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): The tax system as it now operates is archaic in so far as it treats a married woman's income as though it belonged to her husband. In matters such as privacy, tax allowances and reliefs, women are treated differently from men to their disadvantage. Such arrangements undoubtedly no longer reflect the true nature of the relationship between the sexes in our society. The effect of that is not simply to irritate; it perpetuates divisions between the sexes which hamper women's expectations and damage their choices. The effects are not merely on the legal position of women, but on our practical position.

The publication of the Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation marked an important step towards the equal treatment of women and, at the same time, stressed the importance of marriage to the fabric of our society. It was long overdue, and I congratulate the Government on tackling the issues directly in a well-argued case. Nevertheless, it has been disappointing that responses to the Green Paper have apparently been limited. Perhaps that is not surprising as for many people the subject of tax is arcane and rather threatening. They do not understand the mechanism by which tax is calculated and they accept the assessments made for them and pay accordingly. That is especially true of PAYE. Therefore, any consultation exercise on the reform of personal taxation faces particular problems.

First, are the representations reflecting fairly the interests of those affected, and, secondly, how can the views of the silent majority be canvassed? The Green Paper provoked a certain amount of campaigning by several pressure groups. Most of them have a relatively small constituency and are not concerned with the overall picture. There is nothing wrong with that; such groups exist to put the views of those whom they represent. However, the Government need to see further. Short of a national organisation for the reform of married women's taxation, the views of the majority are untapped.

One further point has some relevance. There has been comment from some of the more vocal women's organisations which tend to be on the Left politically. In some cases they have no sympathy with the way in which our economy operates and, not surprisingly, they do not like the Green Paper proposals. But such views are at the margin and should be treated as such. We are dealing with practical problems and the majority of those affected are uninterested in the ideology of fanatics. To say, as some have, that the women's movement is opposed to the Green Paper is to attach far too much importance to a limited, if noisy, group.

I want to take the opportunity to examine some of the arguments that have been put forward while stressing that the basis of the reforms suggested in the Green Paper must represent the way ahead. Reform of the system must take account of several objectives. First, and most important, it must place the tax treatment of married men and women on an absolutely equal basis. There should be a personal allowance against income which is the same for all. There should be a series of changes to the treatment of savings income which remove inequalities to women and

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

disincentives to marriage. If equality of the sexes demands equal personal allowances and no distinction between the sexes in taxation as the foundations of the new system, the expectations of society will provide the superstructure. To be seen to be fair, tax must reflect the values that people hold.

I do not believe that the tax system can or should be used to coerce social change. Its purpose is to fund those services that we require the Government to perform and to do that while avoiding discouraging people from doing things which are part and parcel of our way of life. An obvious example is that there should be no circumstances in which a couple would be worse off in tax terms as a result of getting married rather than cohabiting.

The first step must be a move towards a single personal allowance with a phasing out of the married man's allowance. Equality of treatment — and flexibility in family relationships — suggests that there should be no distinction between husband and wife. Each individual would be responsible for his or her tax returns and correspondence with the Revenue and could remain, if he or she so chose, absolutely independent for tax purposes. Left in that form, the tax system would do nothing to alleviate the financial difficulties a couple suffer if either spouse stops work to look after children or dependent relatives or takes part in unpaid voluntary activity of some kind. Couples in that position would receive the least relief from tax.

I argue that it is right for the state to recognise the family unit as the basic building block of society and marriage as the institution which supports that. The figures are straightforward. In Britain there are more than 11 million married couples of whom nearly 10 million are under the age of 65. The more that the state can do for those units — or, at least, the more unnecessary disincentives it can remove — the greater would be the stability of society as a whole. The consequences, not least in terms of Government expenditure needed to perform a role historically taken by families themselves, are profound.

The first step after the introduction of the single person allowance would be to make arrangements for that allowance to be transferable between spouses in the event that one does not use his or her allowance. That would not be restricted solely to a wife who stopped working to have children. It would be equally applicable if a partner stopped work to look after a dependent relative, to perform unpaid social work or simply to run the home.

Some people argue that that form of transferable allowance scatters relief where it is not needed to the detriment of those with young children in the poverty trap. The argument continues that it would be better to target assistance by abolishing the married man's allowance and using the money saved to fund a substantial increase in child benefit. That implies that the state gives greater weight to the bearing and raising of children than to a wide range of other unpaid activities upon which society depends to a great extent. Those who argue in favour of the child benefit route are arguing ultimately that the wide range of other voluntary activity should be replaced by state-run bodies with the bureaucracy and uncertainty of long-term policy that that inevitably implies.

Let me give some examples. Magistrates in our society receive expenses, but no salaries. A large number of them are married women who do not earn a wage or salary. Charities depend to a great extent on the fund-raising and organisational abilities of volunteers who are not paid and whose motivation is a genuine desire to help. Many people look after elderly relatives or the disabled, who do not necessarily live with them, and cannot seek paid work because of the responsibilities that they have taken on.

All those people embody the idea of service to the community on which we all depend. It is wrong to believe that somehow we are all taking advantage of their service and that this exploitation should be replaced by state provision. On the contrary, the state has an obligation to recognise the true value of such work and its importance matches equally the work of those who raise children and should be equally treated.

Under that argument, it remains to justify the choice of marriage as the best vehicle for underpinning a network of voluntary service. The answer is that it is perfectly logical. Those who do not do paid work by choice are supported by others, and by far the commonest framework for this is the family; more specifically, marriage.

To apply fairly, any system of taxation needs to be as simple as possible. Taxation is a general method of raising revenue from society as a whole. It is a general form of revenue raising, and is conducted on an annual basis; but it is inflexible and does not respond immediately to fluctuations in circumstances which may not be relevant to the year's taxability or, if they are, can be sorted out later.

On the other hand, welfare benefits are specific and immediate. They can be targeted quickly to assist those whose need is sudden, due to variations in individual or household circumstances. That is what it exists to do. Taxation exists not to assist people but to raise money, in the least socially damaging way possible, and at the moment there is little continuum between the two. We must ensure that in raising revenue the state does not then drive people to seek assistance from it.

There is no doubt that the current systems of tax and benefit have a grey area in which the workings of one system cause penalties in the other. The first key to unlocking that problem is to raise the tax threshold. The second lies in the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986, in particular, the introduction of family credit. Ultimately, the objective must be to prevent the poorest people from paying any tax at all.

I have heard another arguement against transferable allowances. That briefly says that if a spouse transfers the allowance to his or her partner, on later returning to work such a person begins to pay tax from the first penny earned, and in some way that is said to be unfair. It is hard to understand that.

First, on a person returning to work the allowance would presumably be used by that person and no longer be transferable — a perfectly equitable state of affairs. Secondly, more money would be earned and the family would be better off overall. The spouse who had received the transferred allowance might be paying more tax, but together the couple would be paying tax exactly as before, with the same overall relief.

Before going on to consider aspects of the tax system as it deals, or should deal, with savings income, I should like to say a word or two about a structure of tax reliefs

through additional allowances. As I said, I see those as necessary to achieve two things—removal of disincentive and active encouragement of self help.

In the latter category I would include a series of allowances which recognise particular long-term family circumstances and disabilities, such as the current widow's bereavement allowance, the dependent relative allowance, the blind person's allowance and that for a married man with children whose wife is wholly incapacitated.

Those allowances are specific and necessary within a system of transferable allowances. I would argue that to allow transfer is to recognise the need to assist in less specific areas. It is a matter for debate whether, for example, looking after a dependent relative who does not live under the same roof, but whose care prevents a person seeking paid work, should attract additional transferable allowance. It is obvious that the state would be responsible for the care of such individuals if private provision were not forthcoming. It would be sensible and financially prudent to provide incentive for the latter. In this context, to have such an allowance is obviously sound. Similar arguments can be adduced for many situations and should be considered on their merits, with the basic proviso that they represent long-term situations that are not suitable for consideration under welfare benefit provision.

Thus far, I have concentrated on the taxation of earned income. In the area of savings income, the degree of equality between the sexes is minimal. Once again, the person who is most heavily penalised is the married woman. The reason is straightforward. Although a wife may elect for her earned income to be treated separately for tax purposes, no such option exists for tax on savings income. Of course, that can have unforeseen consequences. First, a woman cannot have savings without revealing them to her husband — unless she hides them in cash under the floorboards. Secondly, a married couple are greatly disadvantaged. The wife's savings income will attract tax at her husband's rate. If that is greater than hers, their tax bill in this respect will be greater simply because they are married. That inequity also applies to the capital gains tax exempt allowance. A married couple receive one allowance, with their gains being aggregated. If they were not married, they would receive the benefit of two allowances.

Again, the solution is to separate the tax affairs of man and wife. It is perfectly reasonable to expect each person to look after his or her savings, and it should be equally acceptable for tax matters to be similarly treated. Wives should be given, at minimum, the option to elect for separate treatment.

Some people may believe that a discussion of savings income applies only to the wealthy and, therefore, at best is peripherial to the current discussion. But I disagree on two counts. First, I disagree on principle. It is not reasonable to reform one part of the system on the ground that the sexes are not treated equally and that married women are discriminated against if, within another part of the system, the inequality is left untouched. Any reform must see men and women treated equally across the board. Secondly, it is mistake to think that only the wealthy have savings income. Everyone with a building society account has savings income.

Likewise, as home ownership has moved towards 60 per cent. owner-occupation, as occupational and private pension provision increases, and as employee share ownership schemes multiply, so the level of capital ownership in society rises. The fact is that the spread of ownership of wealth is improving. A simple example illustrates that point. Take a couple aged 50, with a mortgage which they have nearly paid off. They may well have savings invested, and the possibility of an occupational pension. Let us say that the wife's parents die, having previously bought their council house, which she inherits. Even following the appropriate tax, the wife will have substantial capital to invest. As home ownership spreads, that will be more and more common, and the tax system should recognise that.

How are we to bring about these changes? Fundamental alterations to the starting points of tax calculations cannot be revenue neutral. It is asking a lot of people to accept that, with a system that is unfair and in need of change, they must bear the brunt of that change without gradual introduction. Many simply would not be able to afford it. The answer is to phase in changes, allowing taxpayers who pay relatively more to have time to adapt and the Treasury to have time to adjust to lower tax revenues. It would also add impetus to the Government's aim of reducing the tax burden.

The problems involved in the reform of taxation are complex, and political will is needed to sort them out. It is outrageous that such discrimination against women still continues. The sooner we correct it, the better. The Government have shown that they have the political backbone to tackle difficult issues and, unlike the Opposition, the perception needed to see beyond the smokescreen of pressure groups. With the election safely won, I hope that this will form part of the next Budget.

10.20 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on her stimulating and thoughtful speech. She has long had an interest in this subject, and in her the cause of fundamental reform of personal taxation has found an informed and enthusiastic champion.

I can understand my hon. Friend's sense of disappointment that we have been unable to go ahead with transferable allowances at this stage, but as I am sure that she appreciates, this step would involve a change in the treatment of every married couple paying tax in this country. We could not embark on a change of this magnitude without a clear and demonstrated strong measure of public support.

As I have made clear elsewhere, the response to the Green Paper struck a note of welcome for transferable allowances. The majority of all those responding who expressed a preference supported the Green Paper proposals. My hon. Friend will be particularly glad to hear that a majority of the women's organisations that commented favoured transferable allowances. However, the number of people responding was low—only about 400 individuals and about 70 organisations. In these circumstances, I think we were right not to press ahead but to take time for further reflection, and to explore the possibility of finding some kind of halfway house.

This does not mean that transferable allowances have been permanently set aside. My hon. Friend's speech has admirably summarised some of the advantages that we saw and still see in this system. It offers married women the opportunity for independence and privacy in their tax affairs. It is flexible in recognising a wide variety of different circumstances and reduces the tax burden on

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

families where one partner, for whatever reason, chooses to stay at home. One of its great strengths is that it reflects the reality of how families organise their financial affairs rather than how theoreticians feel they should be organised, a point that I think my hon. Friend made.

My hon. Friend appreciates the way in which transferable allowances would help not only married couples where one partner is caring for children, but also those looking after elderly parents or disabled relatives. She also sees a place for specific allowances to recognise particular circumstances. The widow's bereavement allowance is a relatively new provision that we introduced in 1980 and extended in 1983. This year we have increased the blind person's allowance by 50 per cent.

I should like to take the opportunity to thank all those organisations and individuals who accepted our invitation to comment on the Green Paper. We described the response as thin, but I hasten to say that this is a comment on the quantity and not on the quality. I am fully aware of the trouble that some organisations went to in canvassing opinion and so giving us access to the views of many more individual taxpayers than might have responded on their own account.

My hon. Friend has remarked elsewhere that one of the problems is that the main beneficiaries of reform will be married women and that married women of Britain have no pressure group to represent them. As she said, we tend to hear from all sorts of special interest groups on these occasions, but it is harder to reach the silent majority.

What, then, of the consultation on the Green Paper? Has it been an unproductive exercise? I think not. The response has been helpful in revealing the consensus of opinion about the major problems within the present tax system.

There is now widespread concern about the way married women are treated. It is rightly felt to be anachronistic in this modern age that the income of a married women should be added to that of her husband and taxed as his as if she had no separate identity. The Green Paper recognised this and the financial penalty that it may involve. This is because a wife's income may bear tax at a higher rate than it otherwise would, because it is taxed at her husband's marginal rate. This is mitigated to some extent by the wife's earnings election which allows a wife to be taxed as a single person on her earned income. However, this election is beneficial only for higher income couples and does not affect the treatment of investment income. My hon. Friend was especially concerned about that.

Many married women have a particular sense of grievance that they do not have a tax allowance in their own right as married men, single people and even children have. The wife's earned income allowance, unlike other personal allowances, is available only against earnings from employment or self-employment or a pension paid to a married woman in her own right. It is not available against a wife's income from savings, which is invariably treated as the husband's income — even though the savings may pre-date the marriage, or arise from the wife's earnings or a bequest.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the problem is not confined to the better off. Well over half of all the adult women in this country now have a building society account, and there is real resentment that a married woman cannot have even a small savings account without having to reveal the interest to her husband for inclusion on the tax return.

A married man's responsibility for declaring the joint income of himself and his wife and meeting the tax liability on it denies married women the right to privacy and independence in dealing with their own financial affairs. A wife must provide her husband with details of her income, but there is no reciprocal obligation on him. That emphasises the inequality of treatment between married men and women under our tax system. It can seem inexplicable to a woman who is doing a full-time job, running a home and bringing up children that she is not normally expected to fill in her own tax return or be responsible for paying tax on her own income.

The message has come across that married women feel that they are second-class citizens under the tax system, and that tax law reflects a view of women's role in society that is wholly out of place in the 20th century. I have considerable sympathy with them. I made it clear in the Budget debate that the Government feel that it is particularly important to give women a fair deal in tax matters. That will be in the forefront of our minds as we are looking at alternative avenues of reform.

A second matter of concern which emerged from the response and on which I regularly receive correspondence is the so-called tax penalty on marriage. My hon. Friend referred to that as well. I have already mentioned the rule that adds together the incomes of a married couple, and the fact that a married woman does not have a full personal allowance. That may mean that the couple pay more tax than two single people in otherwise similar circumstances simply because they are married. That cannot be right.

My hon. Friend also referred to the treatment of a married couple's capital gains, and the fact that they have only one amount to set against their joint gains. The Green Paper suggested that the capital gains of husbands and wives should also be taxed separately, and that each should have an exempt amount. This is becoming a matter of interest to more and more women because of the spread of share ownership. Four million women now own shares —18 per cent. of the adult female population.

There is also a penalty for couples with children. An additional personnal allowance is available to single parents with sole responsibility for children in recognition of the extra help they need. But the allowance also goes to couples with children who are living together as man and wife but who are not legally married. If there are two or more children, they can each claim the additional personal allowance; so their total tax allowances are larger, and their tax bills smaller, than those of a married couple in similar circumstances. That is widely resented.

The tax penalties on marriage are another matter to which we give a high priority. We think that they are wrong.

Moving to independent taxation with transferable allowances in the way suggested in the Green Paper had the great advantage of achieving a shift in the burden of tax away from low income and single earner couples, without losers in cash terms, and without making invidious distinctions between couples on the basis of the way they chose to organise their lives.

A number of the organisations that responded were attracted to an alternative system, which would use the extra tax raised by the abolition of the married man's

allowance to fund increases in social security benefits, and in some cases to create new ones. That system has fundamental disadvantages. As my hon. Friend said, it applies a set of judgments to the reasons why one partner in a married couple may decide not to seek work outside the home, and rewards some while penalising others.

On the whole, advocates of this system are not concerned if some married couples lose some of their tax allowances without any compensation in terms of benefit if they do not approve of the reasons why one partner does not work and is supported by the other. My hon. Friend gave as examples voluntary work and unpaid public service. And little concern is shown for the older wife who, after devoting many years to bringing up a family, would find it hard to re-enter employment.

Concentrating on the support of children rather than the family unit would also ignore marriage. Transferable allowances would have none of these drawbacks. That system was built on the reality of how family finances operate. It provides flexibility and leaves the choices to those who are best equipped to make them. If one partner in a married couple chooses or, by force of circumstances, is unable to take paid work, it is wrong that he or she should suffer an additional financial penalty.

The response to the Green Paper has brought us an important step along the road, and I hope that the time will not be too long delayed before we can make further progress. We shall be looking for other ways—perhaps a halfway house—in which we can pursue the objectives that both my hon Friend and the Government share.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 24 April 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Protection of Animals (Penalties) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

9.35 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

It is but a few months since the first case of dog fighting became public news and the conviction of 11 people was obtained following an abhorrent, disgusting, disgraceful and barbaric case of dog fighting at Enfield. In that case, the police and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals discovered a dog fight in progress between a Staffordshire bull terrier and an English bull terrier, with other dogs waiting to be put up for fights. There were crowds aiding and abetting and it is believed that there had been heavy betting.

Although that fight was stopped well before it finished, one of the dogs was found to have many tooth lacerations and teeth hanging from its jaw. It was necessary to put the dog down to save it from appalling suffering. I believe, and it widely believed, that if it had not been for the merciful intervention of the RSPCA and the police, those dogs would have been pushed and pressurised to fight to the death of one of them. That is the situation with which my Bill seeks to deal.

In its broadened form, the Bill will deal not only with penalties for those who are convicted of promoting dog fights, but with those who are convicted of promoting cock fighting. Recently, there was a case of cock fighting at a remote farm. Other cases of dog fights promoted by individuals are coming before the courts, but it is believed that the cases which have been before the courts and which are due to be brought are but the tip of the iceberg of this wicked practice. Therefore, it is essential to hit those who are convicted of promoting this so-called sport—when they can be found—as hard as possible as a means of stamping it out altogether.

Since there has been no other debate on the Bill in the House, I shall say a few words about what the Bill seeks to achieve and why I brought it before the House. The Great Britain of 1911 was different from the country in which we live today. In many respects we now live in a more violent society, but attitudes have changed and many matters which were accepted in 1911—when there were other substantial forms of animal protection—we do not tolerate today. One of them is cruelty to animals on today's scale.

Why is it that we still use laws on animal cruelty that were passed 76 years ago? That was a time when suffragettes were chaining themselves to Downing street railings. How can a law which was enacted in 1911 be adequate for the 1980s? The truth is that it cannot. Reforms of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 are required, and my Bill seeks to bring them into existence.

First, there is the need for a search warrant facility. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 allows for search warrants to be issued where an offence is suspected, but there is no corresponding provision in the 1911 Act. It is incredible that the warrant facility is available if there is a suspicion that wild birds are being taken or are being kept illegally, but where there is a suspicion that domestic animals are being left to suffer nothing can be done without the co-operation of the offending owners.

The disqualification or banning from keeping animals after first conviction is worth a thought, if I may be allowed it. While there is provision in the present legislation for the courts to disqualify someone from keeping a dog after a first conviction, the same is not true of any other animal. For instance, in one case a young foal was fitted with a halter that was too tight. The foal was judged to have suffered for at least a month from the resulting wounds. These were 1 in deep, maggot-infested and, according to a vet, could be smelt from a distance of 8 m. The vet was amazed that the foal had been able to eat or drink at all. Although the owner was found guilty of causing unnecessary suffering, he got off with a conditional discharge and retained possession of the foal.

In another recent case, eight kittens were found suffering from flu, ringworm, fleas, lice and other infestations. They were suffering so gravely that a vet said:

"I was obliged to euthanase them as a matter of humanity."

The same owner refused to seek veterinary treatment for a cat with an injured eye. After 14 days, an RSPCA inspector took the cat to a vet where it had to have its eye surgically removed. Despite being found guilty of nine cruelty offences, the woman was allowed to keep the cat, plus at least 10 others whose condition gave cause for concern.

Many people share the fears of animal lovers and of the RSPCA for the future of animals like the cat abandoned without food or water for 35 days, which was returned to its owner after payment of a £1·20 fine. Like the society, people wonder whether a £200 fine is a sufficient penalty for a farmer who castrated a bull without any anaesthetic, and using a pair of pliers. What barbaric behaviour.

There are dozens more cases like these of people clearly showing themselves to be unfit to assume the responsibility of ownership of animals but being allowed to retain ownership of them. I hope and believe that anyone who agrees that the law must be changed will support my Bill today, which seeks to give greater protection for animals.

We have all read about, and I have mentioned, the horrific dog fighting cases brought before the courts in the past year or so. Because of the revitalisation of this medieval so-called sport—I say "sport" advisedly—I have introduced this Bill so that those who blatantly cause unnecessary suffering to animals may be realistically punished. The Protection of Animals Act 1911 has fallen far behind modern needs, and no longer does the penalty fit the crime. Violence has increased over the years, but there are those in our society who have sunk to a new low. They are the undesirables who have, with their atrocious

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acts, taken us back to the middle ages when fighting between animals for pleasure was commonplace. It is always heart-rending when one hears or reads of animal neglect, but fighting promoted between animals goes much further than neglect. It is a deep evil, and wanton and deliberate cruelty which causes the animals concerned tremendous suffering and, on occasions, leads to death.

If the so-called sport of dog fighting had been mentioned in the House a few years ago, I am sure that many of those present would have merely raised an eyebrow, because it was not heard of. It was heard of early in the last century, but it was not heard of in the 1980s. Late in the 1970s, a trickle of American pit bull terriers began to appear in Britain. This caused officers of the special investigations department of the RSPCA to take an interest in those arrivals. Due to their persistence—and I pay great tribute to them—it has been proved beyond doubt that many of the more unsavoury characters of our populace accept dog fighting as a sport and readily import pit bull terriers from America for that purpose. Using this breed, together with our indigenous Staffordshire bull terrier and bull terrier breeds, they have bred and sold copious numbers of progeny. Hundreds of young "fighting machines" are now on the circuit, or available for new ownership throughout the nation.

If these dogs take a hold with their teeth on another dog — or even on a human being, if they have been provoked to that extent — they will not let go until death. That basic ferocity in them can be brought out and they can be dangerous. I read in the press recently of a pit bull terrier trained to fight which tore a human being to death in the United States. It is clear that people may be training dogs but then not controlling them. There is a great danger in that which should be noted.

Proof is available that those involved in this diabolical sport are quite often known criminals who take very good care to cover their tracks. Perseverance brought the first breakthrough in such investigations, when a dog fight venue in Potters Bar was raided in 1985 by five RSPCA officers and two police officers. This was the first such raid of the century, and it overcame the skill which promoters of dog fights have shown in recent years when the sport has been increasing of having look-outs and of finding distant and remote places for dog fights. Sometimes they use remote buildings, and sometimes fights between dogs have been promoted in deep pits in the ground as well as in other areas. The promoters cover themselves extremely cleverly by having people look out for police and anyone else who may pay attention so that they get quick warning of any difficulty. Things are covered over very fast and prosecution has been almost impossible.

This was the first prosecution, and it was a great achievement. The prosecution and the ensuing publicity brought more help from the public and consequently three more groups of dog fighters were arrested. In all, 29 persons have been taken into custody and 20 of them have been convicted in the courts. One case in Derbyshire, the result of which should have been known today, has been postponed, so unfortunately we do not know the result.

There can be no excuse for anyone taking part in this sport. Only heavy fines with a longer available prison sentence can be the right deterrent. The parent Protection of Animals Act is dated 1911. That is a long time ago and the social scene was very different then. There have been some amendments to the Act over the years, but public opinion now demands an overdue update.

The officers investigating this wicked business are well aware that, although there have been successes in the past two years, they have touched only the tip of the iceberg. They have prepared themselves for a protracted investigation and this House should offer them and the courts every assistance possible by strengthening the legislation and by increasing the penalties within that legislation. In this way, perhaps some of these criminals will be persuaded to stop their unnecessary activities. In this Bill, I ask that the penalties be increased from level 4 to level 5. There are other provisions in the Act which must be revised in due course, but the penalties I have mentioned require change now.

I shall mention one other idea which could assist when offenders are before the courts in future and which my hon. Friend the Minister might consider. Section 1(1)*(c)* of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 states that if any person

"shall cause, procure or assist at the fighting or baiting of any animal"

he will be guilty of an offence. I believe that the word "attend" should be added. This would have the effect of dealing with any person found at the scene of a dog fight and it would alleviate legal battles during court hearings when people have been charged with assisting. My hon. Friend the Minister may like to consider this, but I realise that it is likely to be outside the scope of the Bill.

The United States faces an even worse problem with dog fighting, but most states have made the offence a felony with heavy fines and up to two years imprisonment. In those states people are arrested for attending without legal argument. I believe that people who attend the cruel spectacle of dog fighting are just as guilty as those who stage the fights.

From the point of view of animal welfare, I believe that it would be ideal to include the names of RSPCA inspectors in the wording of animal legislation. After all, this fine organisation was formed in 1824 — prior to Robert Peel and the police force. Whatever is said regarding animal welfare, the inspectors of the society have been the mainstay for animal protection and law enforcement since the society's inception. Other countries have provisions for animal welfare organisations that are offsprings from our RSPCA. Is it not time that we recognised the oldest and largest animal welfare organisation in the world?

I have been informed by Chief Superintendent Frank Milner, who heads the special investigations department of the RSPCA, that reports have reached him, emanating from the dog fighting fraternity, which suggest that they are dreading any increased penalties. That is a most encouraging prospect for the Bill that I am inviting the House to pass on Third Reading today. The word is getting about among the promoters of dog fights and they are worried. Mr. Milner tells me that information received from reliable sources suggests that promoters believe that a fine is one thing, but they dread increased prison sentences. That is all the more reason why the Bill must proceed.

The Bill has a straightforward aim — to double the maximum penalties for offences under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. The present maxima are a fine not exceeding £1,000, or three months imprisonment, or both.

That fine would become £2,000, which is level 5 on the standard scale, or six months imprisonment, or both. Since the Second Reading of the Bill, substantial drafting amendments have been made in Committee. I believe that it is appropriate to explain the amendments to the House.

Clause 1 is the heart of the Bill, but unfortunately the original drafting of the clause requires alteration. Clause 1 of the original Bill referred to the words "Fifty pounds" in section 1(1) of the 1911 Act. The Bill proposed to substitute for those words

"level 5 on the standard scale".

However, section 1(1) of the 1911 Act no longer contains the words "fifty pounds". The maximum £50 fine was replaced by first a £500 maximum, which under the Criminal Justice Act 1982 became level 4 on the standard scale—that level was increased to the current maximum of £1,000 in 1984. Obviously, nothing can be substituted for the words "fifty pounds" if they are no longer in section (1) of the 1911 Act. The amendment therefore changed this clause of the Bill to ensure that the proposed new maximum penalties of imprisonment for up to six months or a fine not exceeding level 5, or both, were inserted.

The second amendment altered clause 1 of the Bill so that the changes in the maximum penalties under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 which this Bill provides for cannot apply in relation to offences committed before the Bill takes effect. We all respect the reasons for not having retrospective legislation. The House will readily appreciate that it is important that everyone should know clearly what are the likely consequences of their actions if they commit a criminal offence. The maximum penalty that may be imposed if they are convicted of any offence must be certain at the time that that offence is committed. The law cannot shift the goal posts during the match. That is an important principle and, as well as being good practice, I understand that a provision of that sort is contained in article 7(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is clearly right to maintain that point of principle and also to comply with our obligations under the convention.

The third amendment changed the short title of the Bill so that it now reads "Protection of Animals (Penalties) Bill 1987". That is to reflect the fact that the Bill seeks to amend the penalties for all offences of cruelty under the 1911 Act, not just for dog fighting. Although my central remarks have been related to dog fighting, how it is promoted and the effects of such fighting, I have an equally strong, determined and powerful condemnation of the promoters of fights between any animals. I welcome the agreement of the Committee to broaden the Bill to protect all animals. That can do nothing but good.

The fourth amendment inserted a new subsection in clause 2 providing for the repeal of two items of associated legislation that are made redundant by the Bill. The first repeal is the Protection of Animals Act (1911) Amendment Act 1912. That Act has a lengthy title, but it had only one effect—to reduce from six months to three months the maximum sentence of imprisonment that could be imposed under section 1(1) of the 1911 Act. The second change is to schedule 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977. The 1977 Act provides for increases in the maximum fines that could be imposed under a variety of other statutes. For offences under section 1(1) of the Protection of Animals Act 1911, the maximum fine was increased from £50 to £500. That was set out in schedule 6 to the 1977 Act. The Bill seeks to repeal that provision. I believe that those repeals are helpful changes that will remove any possible ambiguity in the law.

The final amendment agreed in Committee was to make a minor drafting change to the extent provision in the Bill clause 2(3). As presented on Second Reading, the clause referred to "Scotland and Northern Ireland". The amendment changed the wording to "Scotland or Northern Ireland", which is the customary formulation.

The Bill has a long history. My original concern had been to obtain increased maximum penalties for the barbaric activity of dog fighting. I originally proposed 10 years imprisonment and a fine of £10,000 for each conviction. I strongly believe that the country would like to see that happen. None the less, it would be a great jump from the present penalties. I appreciate that we must move progressively in such matters. I believe that the Bill, as amended in Committee, is a proper compromise and I am happy with it.

In the past year or so a number of well-publicised cases of dog fighting and cock fighting have come to court. They have served to throw the spotlight on the brutality involved in such activities. There is parliamentary and public concern about those and other forms of ill treatment of animals.

I greatly appreciate the support and encouragement of hon. Members on both sides of the House in the move to enable the penalties imposed on those found guilty of such offences to reflect more fully the public revulsion of those activities. I believe that the proper penalties proposed in the Bill will act as a positive deterrent to all forms of cruelty to animals.

I should like to thank all the hon. Members who helped to take the Bill through Committee, in particular the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) whose timely assistance facilitated the passage of the Bill. I also warmly thank the RSPCA; its support has been invaluable. Without question there is a need for the Bill.

It is frequently said that the test of civilisation in any country is the treatment meted out to dumb animals who cannot retaliate or speak for themselves. I regret to say that on occasions in our society, and in others which are much worse than ours, dumb animals are treated as if they have no feelings and no right to reasonable treatment. That is wrong, inhuman and wicked. Anyone who treats animals in an inhumane way, particularly by pushing them against their will into practising the most lurid aspects of their nature, such as being driven to fight to the death, is guilty of a grave sin and serious evil against society. The Bill will go a substantial way towards remedying that, and I commend it to the House.

10.1 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am glad that I was present when the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) made his speech. I strongly support his views, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who cannot be here today.

We heard the hon. Gentleman's comments about cruelty to animals with all the horror that we feel when hearing such stories. When I was a child playing on waste ground I remember finding kittens or puppies tied up in a sack ready to be thorwn into a pond to be drowned. Such incidents had a profound effect on me and on other young people who found cruelty to animals unacceptable. I am encouraged that in the London area teachers are spending

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more time teaching young people about the importance of respect for life and of not deriving enjoyment from suffering.

I hope that the hon. Member for Ealing, North agrees that further action must be taken in due course. I think in particular of some aspects of hunting. I find it difficult to justify condemning dog fighting while not being critical of hunting for pleasure. I can understand killing for food or to control animal populations, but when it is for sheer sport there is something unhealthy about it. It must be wrong for a person to enjoy killing or the pursuit of the kill.

We should also examine the powers of the police and RSPCA inspectors to enter premises with a warrant when they believe that an animal is suffering unduly. Such powers must be exercised carefully, because civil rights are involved. Appalling suffering can be experienced by an animal but the RSPCA and the police are unable to gain entry to relieve the animal's suffering.

The hon. Gentleman was right to accept the relatively small increase in the fine and prison sentence. The answer to the problem is not be to be found simply in bunging up the fine or sentence. That will not work as a deterrent. We must have a more sophisticated approach to education. We should also consider the appointment by local authorities of dog wardens and others with powers to look after, protect and pick up strays. Dog wardens are already appointed by Northern Ireland authorities.

A variety of animals are at risk, as well as dogs. Our society is full of contradictions and double standards. We make great play of our love of dogs, cats and horses, yet we spend enormous sums killing horses so that their meat can be fed to the dogs and cats who appear so regularly on television advertisements.

It is right to move in the direction proposed by the Bill and to use the law to ensure that animals are not cruelly treated. The Bill is a small step in that direction.

10.5 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on his initiative in introducing the Bill. There is no doubt that it might have been some time before the Government were able to give time for such an important Bill. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing the problem before the House upon so many occasions. His reputation in this area is unparalleled in the House. His knowledge of animals, particularly horses, is based on deep experience. He understands these matters in a way that few other hon. Members understand them. I am glad to pay my hon. Friend that tribute on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, because without him I doubt whether such a Bill would have been introduced at this time.

The Government are pleased to support my hon. Friend. His Bill is an important part of the programme for improving the protection of animals. The Government have a distinguished record in extending protection under the law for animals. An obvious and important example is the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, as is the extensive protection provided under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are two major statutory vehicles by which this Government have been able to extend general protection for animals.

A host of other actions have been taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Government have taken many executive and administrative actions and have a continuing programme for the protection of animals.

Mr. Greenway: I much appreciate my hon. Friend's tribute and the Government's support for the Bill. I thank the Minister and his staff.

Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that it took from 1911 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to update legislation to protect animals? It is sad that there was such an enormous gap when nothing was done. Can my hon. Friend account for that?

Mr. Hogg: That is an interesting question, but it is not correct to say that there were no changes during the long time between 1911 and today. Changes were made to statutes from time to time. For example, legislation was introduced in 1933. I forget the name of the Act, but it enabled the courts to disqualify a person from keeping a dog if that person was proved guilty of cruelty to a dog. There are other examples of amending legislation introduced between 1911 and 1987.

My hon. Friend asks why no other major amending legislation has been introduced. I cannot answer that, except to say that I have a feeling that we are only now, perhaps rather late in the day, beginning to see disturbing evidence of an increase in cruelty to animals. Perhaps that has not been the case for a number of years. My hon. Friend mentioned dog fighting——

Mr. Greenway: On the important point of disqualification, my hon. Friend rightly said that it has been possible since the 1930s to disqualify people from keeping dogs. However, is he aware that, when someone has been banned from keeping a dog following conviction for promoting dog fighting, his wife can keep that dog in the same house? Hence that individual can be found walking the dog, and only after that can the dog be removed. So the position is not wholly satisfactory. Will the Home Office consider extending disqualification from keeping animals to the disqualification of two people who are found guilty of cruelty to horses, cats or other domestic animals?

Mr. Hogg: I was going to come to that important point, but if my hon. Friend will forgive me, I shall deal with it now.

First, it is necessary to define the present position. On first conviction for cruelty to a dog, a person may be disqualified from keeping it. That power does not extend to owners of other animals on a first conviction. For other animals, the power of disqualification arises only on second or subsequent convictions. It is interesting that it was not until 1954 that the power to disqualify for other animals came into being. The power to disqualify in respect of dogs was introduced in the Protection of Animals (Cruelty to Dogs) Act 1933. For other animals, such protection was not available until the 1954 Act.

I am sorry that our right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) is not here today, because he played a prominent part way back in 1954—all of 33 years ago—in extending the protection to other animals.

Under the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1954, a magistrates court on second or subsequent conviction of an offender under the 1911 Act can disqualify a person from keeping any animal covered by the Act. However, that power applies only on second or subsequent convictions.

That legislation started as a private Member's Bill and it is interesting to note why the power of disqualification was so limited. That limitation was promoted mainly by a member of the Conservative party, Mr. Remnant, who was then the hon. Member for Wokingham. He explained the reasons for a limited power of disqualification in these terms:

"the animals in respect of which there may be cruelty are, by their very nature, likely to be the means of livelihood of the individual, such as cattle, sheep, pigs and so on, and I think it is fair to provide an opportunity for the individual offender to be given a sharp reminder if the first offence is a bad case, rather than to disqualify him." — [*Official Report*, 12 February 1954; Vol. 523, c. 1541.]

He continued by saying that it would be wrong to deprive such an individual of his livelihood on first conviction.

Perhaps public sensitivity has changed on these matters. I am inclined to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North that we should consider amending the 1911 and 1954 legislation to give the courts a power upon first conviction for cruelty to disqualify any person from keeping any animal. In other words, we should be extending the power of disqualification from keeping any animal to make it the same as the power of disqualification from keeping a dog. Clearly, that would require primary legislation.

We have a choice: Government legislation or private Members' legislation. Of course, I could not promise at this stage that Government legislation would be introduced because that would depend on a suitable slot in the programme, the agreement of my colleagues and so on. If my hon. Friend is again successful in the private Members' ballot—I hope he will be—perhaps he will consider introducing a private Members' Bill to amend the 1954 Act so that the power of disqualification in respect of other animals can apply on first conviction. He might then find that the Home Office was able to give him enthusiastic support, and I am sure that most hon. Members on both sides of the House would be minded to support such legislation.

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend raised an interesting point that I was beginning to answer on banning powers. He asked me why, in my opinion, the penalties had not been increased until now. Probably that is because there has been an increase in cruelty to animals, which has brought the matter to the attention of Parliament. There is some evidence for that: the figures show that, over six years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of offences brought before the courts.

In 1980, proceedings were brought against 809 persons. In 1981, the number had increased to 833. In 1982, there was a small decline to 822. In 1983, the figure increased to 839 and in 1984 to 875. In 1985, there was a further increase to 989. I regret to say that I cannot give the figure for 1986, but the point is that there has been a gradual increase in the number of persons against whom proceedings have been taken.

There is some evidence of an increase in the number of offences committed. So much can be extrapolated from the figures. Perhaps just as important, there is evidence of increased consciousness of the need to take proceedings against people who are discovered to have committed offences against animals. People who are guilty of these sorts of offence must expect to have proceedings instituted against them in the courts. In that context, my hon. Friend's Bill is of great significance.

It might be of interest to know something about the penalties that the courts have been imposing on those found guilty. There has been a steady increase in the number of cases in which a prison sentence has been imposed. Again, a few figures might illustrate that proposition. In 1980, 11 people were sentenced to prison; in 1981, 10 people were sentenced to prison; in 1982, six people were thus sentenced; and in 1983, there were 10. In both 1984 and 1985, 19 people were sentenced to prison. I cannot give the figures for 1986, but I shall try to make them available to my hon. Friend.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the point the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) would make at this stage — that one should be chary of imposing prison sentences on people for non-violent offences. The hon. Gentleman and I have spoken frequently on this subject at different venues, but most notably in Committee. I think that he probably supports the view that, when dealing with cruelty to animals, there must be a residuary power in the hands of the courts to sentence individuals to a period of imprisonment when they are dealing with gross offences, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has been able to give the Bill his support. One of the effects of the Bill is to increase the maximum period of imprisonment to six months. I do not expect, however, that that maximum period will be imposed too often.

Mr. Soley: I agree that there is a need for the residual power of imprisonment, but I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree with my argument that educating society, and especially young people, to have respect for animals and to treat them properly is all-important. Education, the ability to withdraw a licence where a person has abused the terms of it, and the power of entry will probably be more useful means of prevention than the occasional imposition of imprisonment when a person needs to be locked up as an example of society's disapprobation of an especially cruel offence.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. He has said that he advanced three propositions, and I think that courtesy demands that I should try to deal with them. The first proposition was education, the second licensing, and the third right of entry. Education is important because cruelty to animals is a manifestation of a sickness in the individual. I hesitate to generalise, but for all I know it may be a manifestation of sickness in society. The broader application of education that is not merely confined to schools is an important instrument in trying to persuade people of the social obligations that they owe both to their neighbours and their animals. I agree that education must be an important instrument.

I approach licensing with great reservation because I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman means by it in this context. There are banning provisions in respect of dogs in the 1933 legislation and in the 1954 legislation for other animals. When a person has been found guilty of an offence of cruelty to animals, it is right that there should

[Mr. Hogg]

be a power to ban that person from keeping an animal. To that extent the hon. Gentleman and I are speaking as one. I think that he might support legislation to extend banning powers to ensure that they apply to all animals on first conviction. I note that the hon. Gentleman is nodding.

Mr. Soley: I am considering licensing in the wider sense. The Government should be considering—I believe that they did consider this at one time—extending the dog warden scheme that exists in Northern Ireland to the rest of the United Kingdom, which would involve making the necessary facilities available to local authorities. That would be an important way of making the existing licensing scheme more effective.

Secondly, I would be sympathetic to the idea of extending banning, but I think that there should be a more flexible system than a total ban. There might be cases where the cruelty is of a marginal sort, or particular circumstances might attach to it. We might want to make a certain type of licence available or to provide that a person will be able to recover his licence if he satisfies certain conditions. There are a number of approaches to consider; that is why I think that the Minister is right to offer the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) the opportunity of legislating, if he is lucky enough to secure a high place in the ballot, by means of a private Member's Bill to ensure that there is a flexible system and not a blunderbuss either/or approach.

Mr. Hogg: To extend the banning powers by amending the 1954 Act—that Act is substantially the same as the 1933 Act but its scope is broader—is only to give a discretionary power to the court. Therefore, the court could implement the banning power and make a prohibition order. Alternatively, it could choose not to do so. We would not be imposing any obligation on the court.

With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, I am chary of what he says about licensing. I am beginning to visualise that the Opposition are coming forward with an extensive bureaucracy of control, one from which I shrink as a matter of general policy—and I am sure rightly. I believe that we should avoid bureaucratic controls wherever possible. Therefore, I am sceptical about an elaborate licensing system which itself can be used as a mechanism for preventing people from keeping animals.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend's offer of Home Office support if I were to introduce a further private Member's Bill is generous and I shall take it up at the earliest possible opportunity. From my experience, it is clear that those who are found to have been consistently cruel to animals—cruelty that could lead to a ban on first conviction of the sort that my hon. Friend has described—do not change their ways. Therefore, the power to ban on first conviction would be appropriate. That leads me to believe that bureaucracy would be unhelpful, although I appreciate that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is bending over backwards in trying to be fair. I wish to add merely that I strongly support what my hon. Friend says and that I think that he has my point precisely.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I value his support in these matters. I am conscious that he has unparalleled experience of the matters to which we are addressing ourselves. When he says that we should avoid bureaucracy in the introduction of licensing as a means of controlling those who own dogs, I take that to be a powerful argument on which I would rely.

Mr. Soley: Let us try to clarify what is becoming an increasingly complex issue that might better be dealt with in Committee when we come to examine a future Bill. The dog warden system was introduced by the Government in Northern Ireland with the support of the Opposition, and I am saying that the system needs to be introduced to the rest of the United Kingdom, with the necessary resources being made available to local authorities. That would be no great extension of bureaucracy. The system is a sensible one and it seems to be working well in Northern Ireland.

The suggestion that a conviction of cruelty to an animal should lead to all other animals being banned to the individual or to the rest of the family raises complex considerations. The hon. Member for Ealing, North used the phrase "consistently cruel", but that is only part of the problem. If the other partner, the husband or wife, or perhaps a child of the family, cannot have an animal because of what one other member of the family has done, we are entering a difficult area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Briefly, please.

Mr. Soley: I wish to say as briefly as possible, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Government would need carefully to examine the way in which legislation was drafted if they were not to introduce a system that would be so black and white as to be inappropriate to the needs of the day.

Mr. Hogg: I heard your call for order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I shall be brief in dealing with the matter that the hon. Gentleman has been kind enough to raise. The complexity of his arguments suggests that these are considerations that we should be examining in Committee rather than on the Floor of the House.

The hon. Gentleman's third proposition was the right of entry, which I know has received some support from my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North. It is being asked whether it would be right to give an extended power of entry to private dwelling houses where there is evidence of cruelty to animals. This is an emotive and difficult subject, but we are dealing with an issue of considerable importance. I am the first to recognise that in some instances it is not easy to obtain evidence of the sort that would satisfy the court unless there is a right of entry into a dwelling house. It is in that context that one must consider the propositions that have been put forward.

In substance, there are two propositions: first, that an official of the RSPCA should have a right of entry into a private house, subject, of course, to authority of the court; secondly, that police officers should be given an extended power. There are problems with both propositions. We must begin by recognising—the hon. Member for Hammersmith, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North and I, recognise it—that a power of entry of that kind is a major infringement of liberty. We must never under-estimate the importance of the privacy that people have in their own homes, and we should infringe it only if there is a powerful and compelling reason for doing so and if the House is prepared to justify it to the nation.

Let us consider the proposed power for RSPCA officials. I have the highest regard for the credibility, hard

work and integrity of officials employed by the Royal Society for the Prevention to Cruelty to Animals, but we must ask whether it is right to give people, who are only officials of a private institution, powers of entry into another person's home. I am not persuaded that it would be right to give officials of a private institution, however good that institution may be, the right of entry into a person's dwelling. It would be difficult to persuade the House that such an infringement was right. It is not easy —indeed, it may be impossible—to think of precedents. I am instinctively hostile to that suggestion, not because I under-estimate the importance of the work or disparage the RSPCA in any way, but because I do not think that the principle involved could properly be commended to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must draw the attention of the hon. Member to the fact that the debate is going rather wide of the Bill. I hope that we will get back to the Bill.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was conscious, too, that my remarks were wandering a little wide. Perhaps you will permit me to deal with the other point that was raised—about police officers. I should be sorry not to have the opportunity of considering that matter.

The question that then arises is whether one should give police officers extended powers of entry. Again, I have considerable reservations. The power of entry and the power to issue search warrants were considered at length during the debate on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and that power is confined to the more serious arrestable offences. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know, offences under the 1911 Act are not classified as arrestable offences. Even if they were arrestable offences, it would be extremely difficult, in all conscience, to hold that they were serious arrestable offences in the context of that phrase as it is used by the House. Therefore, we would be contemplating a major extension of the existing legislation, which I would find it difficult to support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North raised an important point about persons who attend dog fights. He asked whether, in this Bill or in some subsequent legislation, we should create an offence of attending dog fighting. To some extent, I can satisfy him by reference to existing legislation. A little research has been done and the position is rather clearer than it was when the matter was first debated by my hon. Friend.

Section 47 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 and section 36 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 already provide that any person found without lawful excuse in any house, room, pit or other place kept or used for the purpose of fighting or baiting any animal shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level one on the standard scale. The effect of that legislation is that attending a dog fight would be an unlawful activity, both in areas covered by the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 and elsewhere in the country. Therefore, legislation is already in place, which meets the point that my hon. Friend raised. He will raise with me a difficulty—the fact that the maximum penalty is only a scale 1 penalty, of £50.

So I have another suggestion to make to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North—that he should introduce another private Member's Bill. Of course, unless, the Government have a suitable vehicle, it would not be possible for us to amend either piece of legislation, but my hon. Friend already has in mind a private Members' Bill to extend the banning powers. We have already discussed that matter. It would be perfectly possible for my hon. Friend to tag on that Bill a clause to increase the scale—it could be scale 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5—and apply it to the two pieces of legislation to which I have drawn attention.

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the important point that he has made in response to my request to look at the possibility of making attendance at dog fights or any other promoted fights between animals a convictable offence. I am glad to have the information that he has put before the House. I shall certainly take up his offer of introducing amending legislation to increase the scale of penalties for those who are found guilty of attendance at animal baiting. I appreciate what he has said, and I shall act upon it as soon as possible.

Mr. Hogg: I am encouraged to hear that. The hon. Member for Hammersmith would want to lend his support to that legislation. He may be able to bring some members of his party with him when he does so.

I ask my hon. Friend, when he contemplates that legislation, not to introduce legislation that would make any such offences triable on indictment. In effect, my hon. Friend called for the legislation to be beefed up. I hope that he will take the view that we should leave such offences as summary offences. I should be sorry if he were to consider making such offences triable on indictment, partly because the Crown courts are already heavily overloaded, and partly, too, because the swiftness of justice and the swiftness of the administration of a penalty is a powerful deterrent. If a person has the opportunity to go to the Crown court, naturally it will make for a delay. Indeed, if one considers the penalties that have been imposed by the courts in recent years, one would be right to question whether it would be right to take such matters to the Crown court.

I have a few figures about the imposition of fines. In 1985, of those fined under the Protection of Animals Act 1911, 514 people were fined less than £100, 148 were fined between £100 and £200, 35 were fined between £200 and £500, and only six were fined between £500 and £1,000. The great majority of fines, over 500 of them, were under £100.

I think that my hon. Friend would say, and I echo the view, that the courts should attach to offences of this kind a greater significance than perhaps they have done hitherto. Although it is probably not necessary in terms of meeting justice to extend the penalties in the way that my hon. Friend has in mind, nevertheless we are today sending an important signal to the courts. It is that Parliament believes that those are very serious offences and that the courts should punish offenders in the context of the penalties that we are setting out.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept my argument that those who attend animal baiting meetings and bet at them are as guilty as those evil men and women who promote the fights between the animals in the first place? If they are, does my hon. Friend accept my argument that they should be hit at least as hard as the promoters?

Mr. Hogg: I cannot give a conclusive view on the matter because I have not directed my mind to what should be the appropriate maximum penalty under the legislation to which I have drawn attention—the two statutes which make attendance at dog fighting unlawful. In principle, I think that the maximum of scale 1 is too low. Although I should have to take advice and find the opinion of colleagues and go through all the hoops that junior Ministers have to hop through, I can see no objection in principle to extending the maximum penalties to scale 5 and to six months' imprisonment for offenders.

That does not answer the question whether there is the same degree of culpability between the promoter and the person who attends. I do not think that one can answer that question sensibly. There is probably not the same degree of culpability, certainly not in every case. There is a whole range of reasons why people attend. In some cases they attend out of idle curiosity. A person who attends for that reason is not doing a very attractive thing, but his moral culpability is probably less than that of the promoter.

A person might attend because he is a trainer of fighting dogs—if such a person exists. His degree of culpability is certainly the same as that of the promoter. Then there is the person who attends because he is brought along by the promoter, someone who just tags along. His degree of culpability is less than that of the promoter. I am not able to give a conclusive answer to my hon. Friend, save to say that there is a broad spectrum of motive. Sometimes those who attend are as guilty as the promoter and sometimes they are not as guilty.

You have been extremely forbearing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and have allowed me to extend the range of debate rather wider than perhaps I should have done. However, a number of important points have been raised, including some by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. I am grateful to him for his support. I wish that the Labour party would give us more support more frequently, but it was nice to see the hon. Gentleman supporting us in this debate. I have also been asked a large number of important questions by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North. Therefore, it was important for me to have an opportunity to respond in detail. However, I am grateful to you, Sir, because I know that I have trespassed somewhat on your patience.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North deserves tribute from the House because he has directed his efforts and his skills to meeting a problem which is of increasing significance. By way of his Bill he has sent an important message to the courts and, much more important, to those who are involved in these activities. It is an important message which I hope that both will heed. As part of our programme of extending protection to animals, the Government are very pleased not only to support the Bill but even to improve it in parts. We have an extremely good record in animal protection. My hon. Friend, Home Office officials and the Government in general working together have introduced an important piece of legislation and I hope that it will receive the support of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motor Cycle Noise Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Schedule

OFFENCES AND ENFORCEMENT

10.46 am

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I beg to move, in page 3, line 34, leave out from second 'provisions' to end of line 36.

In what may be the dog days of this Parliament, the amendment seeks to make a simple correction to the drafting of the Bill. It takes account of revised schedule 2 to the Consumer Safety Act 1978, which was introduced by the Consumer Safety (Amendment) Act 1986, with which we are all familiar in detail. The amendment is purely technical and does not affect the intention of the Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): It is probably best on Report if I stick precisely to the amendment. Later, I should like to say one or two things about the measure. The Government support the amendment. As my hon. Friend rightly said, it corrects and simplifies the reference in his Bill to schedule 2 to the Consumer Safety Act 1978.

Amendment agreed to.

Order for Third Reading read.

Mr. Adley: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

As hon. Members will know, this is the first time that we have had an opportunity fully to debate this measure on the Floor of the House. I shall do my best not to stray beyond the bounds of order, but, of course, we are dealing with an important matter involving road safety and environmental and health considerations and I trust that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will allow me to touch on some of these issues.

I thank my hon. and injured Friend the Minister, who is suffering from severe back problems. I hope that if he is called upon to intervene in my speech, or if I seek to intervene in his, and particularly in the latter case, the convention under which my hon. Friend has to keep bobbing up and down can be waived. I hope that that situation will not arise, but if it does I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend will welcome your concern for his physical condition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): If a Minister or an hon. Member is suffering discomfort, it is within the power of the House to allow him to speak from a sedentary position.

Mr. Adley: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will appreciate that. I am not sure whether he would be better off standing up or sitting down, but before we get too involved in this I am sure that your remarks will be warmly welcomed by my hon. Friend in his hour of pain and need.

I should like to thank my sponsors. This is very much an all-party Bill and has received considerable support from right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. As I did in Committee, I should like to thank the officials at the Department of Transport. Hon. Members take all the credit for Bills like this, but very often it is the

civil servants who do all the work. There is no harm in putting that on record, and I pay tribute to the civil servants for the generous time that they spent in preparing and bringing forward the Bill.

Today we will not see the Press Gallery crammed full, and radio and television will not hang on our every word, as this piece of legislation, or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) called it in his O-level Latin, "leg-islation", is debated. I do not know how *Hansard* will cope with that one. This debate will not attract a great deal of attention. The House is quietly and constructively debating a measure on which it is united. It is sad, but perhaps, inevitable, in a democratic society that only when there is aggravation and unpleasantness that the cameras appear, microphones are switched on and the newspapers come running. I am perfectly happy that our little discussion and debate today should achieve its objective rather than attract a great deal of attention.

I want now to consider matters that do attract a great deal of attention. The high-pitched whine of a deliberately exacerbated noisy motor cycle must come fairly near to the top of the list of those noises and intrusions into life that draw attention to themselves. The peace and quiet of a summer night in the countryside or of suburban slumberers on housing estates can be disturbed by that unpleasant and aggravating noise. People can be worked up into a considerable froth and lather. The Bill seeks to deal with that social nuisance.

There are two principles at stake in the Bill. The first is our attempt to deal with a noise, deliberately made. I shall stress that in more detail shortly. We are not dealing with the everyday activities of motor cyclists. We are dealing with a handful of people who quite deliberately set out to make as much noise as possible. That is unacceptable if their activities disturb and aggravate the majority of their fellow citizens who are merely seeking to go about their lawful and peaceful business.

The second principle relates to environmental pollution, of which noise is a clear manifestation. I believe that in the House we have a responsibility ruthlessly to tackle environmental pollution. In its small way, the Bill tries to do that. The internal combustion engine is a uniquely nasty source of environmental pollution. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is one of the sponsors of the Bill. With his Heavy Commercial Vehicles (Controls and Regulations) Act 1973 he took a first and important step to rein back on the environmental pollution caused by vehicles on our streets and on our roads. Indeed, the latest transgressor to a long list of polluters could easily be construed to be the modern coach being driven in a way which the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), when a Minister at the Department of Transport described as "intimidating". Furthermore, coaches are parked illegally on the streets of our towns and cities, with their engines running, causing vile fumes to be flung into the faces of motorists and pedestrians. I hope that the House will deal with that matter in due course.

It is clear that no self-discipline is being exercised by the bus and coach industry on that point. The Government are being forced to use legislative powers to deal with another aspect of road safety by forcing speed-governors on the coach industry. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport will recognise that the noise and fumes aspect—and we are dealing with motor cycle noise in the Bill—of coaches is a matter with which the Department of Transport must deal next.

I can safely say that this is likely to be a popular Bill in its attempt to deal with a source of great aggravation. I want however, to stress clearly that the Bill is in no way anti-motor cycle. No hon. Member who has supported the Bill or was a member of the Committee was motivated by spite or hostility towards motor cycling. Indeed, particularly in many rural areas, the mobility provided by the motor cycle for people on low incomes is a vital part of their lives. I do not want the message to leave the House that the Bill is hostile to the interests of motor cyclists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Will my hon. Friend confirm that many of my constituents who are motor cyclists have welcomed the Bill? They believe that the ill-feeling caused by the appalling noise made by some cycles gives the whole motor cycle fraternity a bad name. My constituents welcome the measure.

Mr. Adley: I believe that my hon. Friend must have been peering metaphorically over my shoulder. I wholeheartedly concur with her comments. I shall carry straight on from the cue with which she has kindly provided me and amplify the point that she has just made.

I have received strong support from the Motor Cycle Association for the Bill. I want to put on record my thanks to that association for the display of noisy exhaust systems that it showed to me as part of its campaign to get Parliament to deal with the problem which it knows—as my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) said—gives the motor cycling fraternity a bad name.

The British Motorcyclists Federation has also lent its strong support to the Bill. I want to quote from a letter that I received from Mr. John Chatterton-Ross, the director of Government relations for the British Motorcyclists Federation. He wrote:

"I am writing on behalf of the British Motorcyclists Federation to give our support to your work on this subject, which I understand is the subject of a bill sponsored by you.

Around fifty thousand motorcyclists belong to the BMF and we regard the solution of the noise problem as a matter of the first importance."

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West. She echoed the sentiments of those responsible elements within the motor cycling fraternity who recognise that they all suffer and that their hobby and interest suffers as a result of a handful of unfortunately motivated people.

Support for the Bill ranges far wider than that. I have received a number of quite surprising communications of support. I do not want to weary the House this morning with endless quotations. However, I was impressed and particularly delighted to receive a letter from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. I want to quote from the director general of that association, Mr. John Groom. He wrote:

"May I congratulate you on the progress of your Bill and may it soon become law. As an individual I have sometimes been asked were I a legislator what single measure would I like enforced; my answer has invariably been a measure to combat noise pollution and especially the searing racket created by motor cycles.

But I also write on behalf of the 160,000 registered blind people and guide dog owners in particular. Noise for all of them, so reliant on hearing, is a blind man's fog. Indeed, wind is described in such terms. The success of your Bill will help every one of them."

[Mr. Adley]

Only a very immodest person would not be humbled to receive a letter such as that.

Amongst the numerous representations from diverse quarters of our nation, I have received support from the Lancashire Association of Parish Councils, from the planning and transportation committee of the Association of District Councils, as well as from numerous individuals, local authorities at all levels, my constituents and from hon. Members' constituents all over the country.

The purpose of my Bill is specifically to control the quality of replacement exhaust systems and silencers for motor cycles when they are offered for sale. I stress the words "when they are offered for sale". New motor cycles must comply with the noise limits set out in European Community directives, and replacement silencers should match the original equipment in quality and performance. Many of the cheaper replacements currently on the market do not do so. To anyone who doubts that, I commend a visit to the Motor Cycle Association to see the wide variety of deliberately noisy exhaust systems that are available for sale.

There is now a British standard for motor cycle exhausts, and the Bill will enable the Secretary of State to require replacements to be marked with a standard number or with the words "Not for road use". It will mean that all silencers offered for sale must bear some marking. Again, I stress that we are dealing here not with the initial equipment supplied on new motor cycles, but with replacement exhausts deliberately designed to create as much noise as possible.

The enforcement of the Bill's provisions would be by trading standards officers employed by local authorities who would have powers largely identical to those provided in consumer safety legislation. At present, enforcement of the law against the use of noisy exhaust systems is an almost impossible task for the police, who are left to chase offenders round the countryside and towns. All hon. Members would agree that our police forces have many tasks laid upon them by the House and many calls upon their time by members of the public, and we could all, without difficulty, think of more urgent things for them to be doing than trying to deal with this problem. The Bill will enable trading standards officers to deal with the problem at source. It is a simple measure because it transfers to trading standards officers powers which until now they have not possessed.

The Bill provides for maximum penalties that will enable the courts to deal firmly with persistent offenders who might have much to gain from flouting the law by selling cheap, substandard silencers to young, immature riders who need little encouragement to make a nuisance of themselves. Noisy motor cycles are a nuisance. The Bill seeks to make them remain as quiet as they were when new, and it has the general support of all responsible motor cycle organisations, including riders and manufacturers.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who is one of the Bill's supporters, has made the point several times to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and to many of his colleagues that, in due course, he wishes the Government and the House to deal with the behaviour of the handful of anti-social motor cycle delivery drivers who spend their time weaving in and out of traffic, causing great danger to themselves and potential danger to other road users.

Last night I had the honour to address the annual dinner of the Amicable Society of Blues, which is neither a supporters club for Chelsea football team nor anything to do with the Conservative party. As hon. Members will know, it is connected with Christ's hospital school. When I mentioned what I was doing this morning, I receive widespread support for my Bill. One of my fellow diners raised the problem of the deliberate leaving-on of the two-way radios fitted to delivery motor cycles. My hon. Friend the Minister might comment on whether the Government will support a measure to deal with that form of noise pollution.

May I ask my hon. Friend some more questions directly connected with the Bill? Is he satisfied that sufficient funds will be available to trading standards officers to enable them to carry out the tasks that they are being given by the Bill? I have had contact with trading standards officers, who have expressed anxiety about the funding that will be made available to them as a result of the Bill. Has my hon. Friend consulted them directly? If he has not, will he do so, not just on funding, but on whether they are satisfied that the Bill gives them all the powers that they need to deal with the problem?

What action will my hon. Friend take to publicise the measure? Although it would be inappropriate and unfortunate to pretend that merely by passing legislation we can eradicate the problem instantly, there is no doubt that the wider the publicity about the contents of the Bill, the more likely we are to discourage importers and those who sell these offensive pieces of equipment. I hope that my hon. Friend can find some funds for this purpose from his Department's budget for publicising measures that he wishes to bring to the attention of the public.

Has my hon. Friend yet had, or does he intend to have, contact with Customs and Excise officers so that we can deal with those who import noisy exhaust systems? I shall not be unkind enough to name the countries from which some of those systems come, but I urge my hon. Friend to consider that effective way of tackling the problem.

Noisy motor cycles are but a tiny example of the cost to the nation of trying to cope with the problems created by the internal combustion engine. We do not seem to hear much about the costs to society. We hear from the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club, the Road Haulage Association, the Freight Transport Association, the Bus and Coach Council and from endless permutations of the road transport lobby about the wonderful manifestations of the internal combustion engine that they have been inflicted upon society. Rarely, if ever, do we hear about the immense range of problems, difficulties and costs that they impose upon society, of which noisy exhausts on motor cycles are just one example. Some of those organisations have made the ludicrous proposition that since motorists pay money in road tax and tax on fuel, it should be returned to motoring-related activities. It is one of the silliest and most illogical arguments that I have heard. It is the same as suggesting that the money raised by the Government in gambling tax should be spent on building more casinos. None of us would support that.

We should recognise that the road transport industry in all its manifestations is a ghastly environmental polluter. I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister a

recent report on the diesel engine by Friends of the Earth, and I hope that the Department will soon publish its response to that report. Even the Road Haulage Association recognises that there is much validity in some of the comments in that report.

If the Bill receives its Third Reading, I hope that events elsewhere will not overtake our attempt to place it on the statute book. To make the task of my hon. Friend the Minister easier, I have obtained the support of Lord Bottomley of Middlesbrough in the county of Cleveland to act as the Bill's sponsor in the other place. He is well known to many of us in this House, and is universally admired both here and in the other place. I am sure that he will give the Bill the treatment that it deserves and see it speedily on its way.

I commend the Bill to the House. The Government should act as soon as the Bill is on the statute book, and I hope to receive the support of the Minister in my small endeavours.

11.9 am

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for intervening at this stage, but as a member of the Defence Select Committee that investigated the Westland affair, I wish, through you, Sir, to ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement at the earliest possible opportunity—probably on Monday—about the startling allegations about share dealings in Westland at a crucial time for the determination of that company's fate. I seek an assurance from the Minister that policy relating to critical defence industries is determined by legal process and by the Government, and not by the activities of anonymous and unidentifiable shareholders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is not a matter for me, but his remarks will doubtless be passed on.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you tell the House whether the Department sought to make a statement today? The information indicates a serious concert party and suggests that the evidence lacking to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry has now come forward. That sheds a very different light on these unhappy matters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that no request has been made for a statement.

11.12 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Returning to the Bill —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I would not say, "Hear, hear," when I hear of illegal share dealings. It happens so frequently these days that we should have a Minister permanently present to deal with the problem which damages the legal fabric of our country, as well as respect for law and order.

As the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) said, the Bill has all-party support, and no one will be surprised at that. I am not so sure that the hon. Gentleman would receive all-party support for his comments about buses.

Mr. Adley: Coaches.

Mr. Soley: Or coaches. The Government of which the hon. Gentleman is such a great supporter have done much to decimate rural bus services, and to lower standards, which we all know will continue to fall. In principle, what the hon. Gentleman says is right, but the Government have compounded an already difficult problem.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman made it clear that the Bill is not to be seen as an anti-motor cyclist Bill. Many people have strong views about the safety and noise of motor cycles, but many people also know that motor cycles provide enjoyment and satisfaction and that they have a real use. Those who have been motor cyclists—I include myself—know of the satisfaction that motor cycling can give.

We must not discourage noise pollution and at the same time encourage atmospheric pollution, which represents an important part of the problem. I suspect that the Minister will be aware that that underlies some of the problems of legislating in this area.

I do not claim to be an expert—although I have some personal experience—but the problem arises not so much from the quality of exhausts in the first instance as from exhausts that are damaged, and thus made inefficient, either by use or deliberately by the person who uses the motor cycle. We should be realistic, and understand that young people are likely to damage exhausts to get the extra noise that adds to the excitement and draws attention, which is attractive to teenagers.

I am not saying that I ever damaged the exhaust of my Triumph Tiger 100, but my brother ran an Enfield down the road with no exhaust at all—which seems to me considerably worse—with dramatic effect. Young people do that sort of thing for short periods. They usually grow out of it, but it is upsetting to others who have to suffer the noise and who may not want to have their attention drawn to a teenager while they are sunbathing or watching the television.

I was struck by the contents of a letter from R. W. Osborne to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). Mr. Osborne argued convincingly about the way in which the Government should approach the matter. He said that, given that the test certification process is involved, it might be useful for the Government to consider the case for the police or test certificate officers to allow perhaps 14 days for a person to put right a non-dangerous fault. That suggestion has some attractions, although I do not claim to have thought it out carefully.

Mr. Osborne has given the matter some thought and his suggestion could be useful in dealing with this difficult problem and in ensuring that the police are not seen as taking people through the courts unnecessarily. After all, the aim of the process is to ensure that a fault causing noise, or other non-dangerous fault, is repaired effectively.

I was encouraged to hear that the British motor cycle industry is doing rather better than it was, and in particular that Triumph motor cycles are being produced again. British motor cycle exports, even to Japan, are improving, and we must not do anything to damage the industry's chances. The Government already have a reputation for destroying manufacturing industry, and it would be sad if they placed further burdens on the industry that prevented British machines competing effectively with Japanese models. Japanese models tend to be quieter, not least because of their multiple piston systems, but as a result of that they cause more atmospheric pollution. While legislating to inhibit noise pollution by British

[Mr. Soley]

motor cycles, we should not forget other aspects of pollution caused by imported motor cycles. The subject clearly needs careful consideration.

I have the impression that the problem arises mainly from relatively small motor cycles. Large motor cycles seem to be used predominantly on main roads. Small motor cycles which have had the baffles of their exhausts spiked can be intensely annoying and extremely noisy. As I understand it, that is the sort of issue that the hon. Member for Christchurch seeks to address in the Bill. It is the noise factor that has attracted all-party support. It is the annoying relatively low capacity motor cycles that make such a noise and can be so incredibly frustrating that have caused so much trouble in city and country areas alike. It is on that basis that the Opposition——

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who speaks on behalf of the official Opposition. I shall not go over his initial points, but Charlie's Cars is certainly providing my constituents with a service that they could not have enjoyed before the recent legislation. Does the Labour party accept, however, that pollution by noise and diesel fumes, especially from coaches, is a major problem in our cities and that if the industry will not deal with the problem the Government will have to legislate?

Mr. Soley: I thought that that was implicit in my comments, but I will make it explicit. Yes, we agree. The whole pollution issue, both atmospheric and noise pollution, is extremely important particularly in city areas. I was saying that putting noise limits on British bikes must be seen in the context of the need to deal with atmospheric pollution by foreign bikes competing in British markets. My point was not that we should reduce the noise limits but that we should set higher standards for imported bikes in terms of atmospheric pollution. I think that the hon. Gentleman agrees with that.

Mr. Adley: My point goes wider than motor cycles. Coaches, especially, are causing a major problem.

Mr. Soley: I am happy to confirm what the hon. Gentleman says. Indeed, the Opposition have expressed concern that the Government are not moving fast enough with regard to lead in petrol, which is another aspect of the same problem.

There is overall support for the Bill, for all the reasons that the hon. Member for Christchurch has given. It is important to stress that the Bill is not an anti-bike measure. I believe that there is merit in examining ways to ensure that standards are maintained in terms of noise and non-dangerous repairs without necessarily dragging people through the courts. The Minister may find it useful to consider that at a later stage. There is no doubt that motor cycle noise is a great nuisance in some areas and must be dealt with. On that basis, we welcome the Bill.

11.21 am

The Parliamentary Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): First, I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) for your kind remarks about my incapacity, which I hope will not be too obvious. If I lock up, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) will nip out and fetch the sticks that I have been using for the past few days.

During most of the debate we were honoured by the presence of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), who would no doubt strongly confirm the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch about the effect of noise pollution on those who are hard of hearing. As my hon. Friend said, extraneous noise complicates life enormously for those with weak hearing. As I have responsibility for the transport needs of the handicapped and disabled, and as in my previous position at the Department of Employment I had responsibility for work opportunities for the handicapped and disabled, I should point out that my hon. Friend's Bill, which has all-party support, will benefit not just those who are fit and have good hearing but those who are less fit, hard of hearing or blind. As my hon. Friend said, the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association also supports the Bill.

As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) echoed in his welcome contribution on this point, all-party support for a measure of this kind is important. My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch has also secured the support of the whole motor-cycling community, both the trade and the riders. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) said in her valued intervention, motor cyclists themselves are interested in protecting the good name of motor cycling. As I said when we launched our consultation paper, "Safer Motorcycling", the Government, and indeed the whole House, wish to preserve and enhance the good aspects of motor cycling while cutting out the bad. I am grateful to all those who responded to that consultation paper, which was concerned mainly with safety, but we are also concerned to reduce environmental pollution of all kinds and to cut out unnecessary pollution.

Noise pollution carries further than anything else, at least in the short term. One may argue about the effects of burning coal and about acid rain which carries across continents, but the noise from a motor cycle can be louder than an aeroplane. Most of the Department of Transport is based in the south tower at Marsham street, just across Horseferry road from Westminster hospital. The motor cycle noise that I hear from the 12th floor can thus be heard by all the patients and staff in Westminster hospital. The same applies to old people's homes, and so on, throughout the community. People who need and deserve less noise are annoyed and irritated by motor cycle noise and the most vulnerable are disturbed the most. I believe that there have been very few representations against the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch told me earlier today that he had had one letter from a member of the Motorcycle Action Group but that he had dealt with it by telling the writer that the group supported the Bill.

Mr. Adley: Perhaps I should clarify that. The Motorcycle Action Group, which is represented on the National Motorcyle Council, is one of the supporters of the Bill.

Mr. Bottomley: No doubt a few traders will find that when the Bill becomes law they will be selling fewer noisy motor cycle exhausts, but they should not complain about that as the profit margin on quiet, legal exhaust systems should be roughly the same as on noisy, illegal ones.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend agree that all Governments should campaign against the deliberate creation of pollution for profit, whether by selling noisy

motor cycle exhausts or by operating coaches and trying to beat the competition regardless of the cost to the community?

Mr. Bottomley: That may be so, but, at the risk of falling out with my hon. Friend, I should point out, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith knows, that when we put forward a safeguarding proposal for WEIR — the Western Environment Improvement Route — along the railway line at Earl's Court, the letters that we received expressed as much concern about increases in the number of trains as about road traffic. I suspect, therefore, that a debate on the relative merits of trains and coaches would produce arguments on both sides. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy was at the Department of the Environment, he said that he thought that the way to flush out the environmentalists would be to put forward a proposal to close the M1 because nobody liked roads and to build a new railway line across southern England to see how many people would favour the activities of a modern Brunel in their area.

Mr. Adley: The road transport industry and those selling seats for hire and reward on the roads do not pay the track costs and other expenses, which amount to £600 million per year, for the railways. Sir Robert Reid once commented that if he parked a train illegally at Piccadilly Circus he would soon have somebody down on his neck. If my hon. Friend the Minister seriously intends to raise debate — I hope that he will — about the relative environmental advantages of road and rail, he must start from a fair comparison. I look forward to discussing the subject at great length on that basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not today, please.

Mr. Bottomley: I am sure that Sir Robert Reid welcomes the feeder traffic that he receives through coaches and buses. Many people arrive at railway stations on roads, some on foot, some on bicycles, and some on motor cycles — if that keeps me in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some arrive by car, but many arrive on buses and coaches.

Mr. Adley: I did not mention buses.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is trying to put me off.

If you do not mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps I can return for a moment to the comments made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. He talked about destroying manufacturing industry. It is probably worth noting that, with the changes in productivity in this country, many people in manufacturing wish that more things were produced in this country or that they could buy more of their components here. If the hon. Gentleman listened to senior people in Vauxhall and Ford, he would probably hear them saying things that were not terribly polite about their predecessors for sourcing so much outside Great Britain. In fact, the proportion of cars assembled in this country has increased from 41 per cent. to 50 per cent. in the past year or so. That is good news for Britain.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the British motor cycle industry. I should declare an interest because I own some shares in NVT, which was a great part of the British motor cycle industry. I should also declare that I bought them well before I became a Member of this House. They have been valueless for most of the time that I have been in the House. I do not intend to sell them while I am the Minister responsible for roads and motor cycling. I hope that I shall not discover that another Minister has been involved in buying or selling such shares.

I take the hon. Gentleman's point about the health of the motor cycle manufacturing industry. The reproduction and replica motor cycles that are made in this country, as well as some of the new, modern advanced ones that are made for use by the police services, are greatly welcomed by those who have the interests of the British motor cycle manufacturing industry at heart.

In the main, we are talking about the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch. However, the hon. Member for Hammersmith also referred to rural bus services. My hon. Friend referred in an intervention to Charlie's Cars. I am sure that such a service would not have been possible without deregulation. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West was invited to inaugurate the Godalming town bus — I am sorry, I mean the Haslemere town bus. I referred to Godalming because the county council discovered that, because the subsidy required was so low, instead of being able to bring in two new bus services, it could add a third, which, I believe, included Godalming.

Generally, there has been benefit from deregulation. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hammersmith and some of his hon. Friends who have doubts would like to consider how soon the benefits of deregulation could be extended so that in our own constituencies in London we can have more services going into areas where, up to now, there have not been any services——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister's comments do not have much to do with motor cycle noise.

Mr. Bottomley: That depends on whether one thinks a motor cycle is more or less noisy than a minibus service or a taxi service. We may discover that some people are giving up their motor cycles and using the new forms of public transport.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Member supports that, and I am most grateful.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In my constituency it has been suggested to me that many of the new minibus services that have been introduced since deregulation have resulted in people not having to use motor cycles. That has met with considerable support from those who worry about the safety of people on motor cycles and those who worry about the noise and the other pollution caused by motor cycles.

Mr. Kirkwood: That was better.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is not supposed to introduce divisions between hon. Members of the same party.

To return to the content of the Bill and avoid further problems with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that the hon. Member for Hammersmith also referred to the different types of exhaust systems for motor cycles. He referred to original equipment, to equipment that is modified in ownership and to replacement equipment that is deliberately more noisy than the original equipment, which must meet the standards. He was right in saying that —there is no problem with original equipment.

[Mr. Bottomley]

The Government support the Bill and welcome the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch in bringing it forward. It will greatly help our efforts to reduce motor cycle noise and should encourage the motor cycle trade to ensure that it supplies replacement exhausts and silencers to enable every model to meet the noise limits set in European Community directives. For most of the machines that are currently on the road, that means compliance with the limits set in directive 78/1015/EEC. From 1990, new motor cycles and, therefore, replacement exhausts for those machines must comply with a new directive, 87/56/EEC, which was agreed at the Environmental Council last November. Now that that directive has been adopted by the Council, we intend to prepare draft amendments to the construction and use regulations to make the new limits applicable at the due dates to new machines registered in Britain.

I can assure the House that those improvements can be made by European motor cycle manufacturers whose Governments are party to the agreement, with improvements to detailed design and key components, and to the silencers and the sources of mechanical noise. The new limits and the dates of their implementation reflect the policy to which the Government are now committed, that is, to make motor cycle manufacturers improve their products and keep in step with the progress that is being made by car, lorry and bus manufacturers to reduce noise at source. It is one thing to ensure that new motor cycles are quiet, but we also need to ensure that they remain that way in use.

My hon. Friend's Bill will help to ensure that, because it strikes at important aspects of the problem of replacement silencers. We should be able to require replacement silencer manufacturers and importers to demonstrate that their products do all that they are supposed to do. If my hon. Friend succeeds in cutting down the nuisance caused by inadequate silencers, a great many people will have good cause to be grateful to him.

The question of enforcement has been raised. When I went on a short tour of south-east Asia last year, I visited a vehicle testing station in Singapore where a whole group —I am not sure of the collective term for young motor cyclists and their motor cycles—

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): A roar.

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. A roar of motor cycles and motor cyclists was gathered in that vehicle testing station. They were the previous night's collection of motor cyclists who had wrongly drawn attention to themselves through their noisy behaviour. They were summoned to have their vehicles tested. That caused a degree of aggravation for the motor cyclists and provided a low-cost opportunity to test whether their cycles met the various requirements, including the noise requirements. It may be that such an approach could be considered by police forces in this country. Perhaps it could be tied in with trading standards officers or with the vehicle examiners in the Department of Transport. I am not saying that that is what must be done, but it would be a way of trying to scoop up people and have a low-cost but effective way of checking that motor cycles do not make too much noise.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith referred to Mr. Osborne, who had been in correspondence with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on a defective vehicle rectification scheme, under which, instead of immediate prosecution, people would be required to put their vehicle in good order and to demonstrate that they had done so. That idea is being promoted by several police services. People will be able to see how effective it is and whether it can be extended. No one wants to see unnecessary prosecutions. There are various ways of avoiding prosecutions. One is to reduce the number of offenders. That is the key point which, in a low-cost way, goes to the source of much of the obnoxious, unnecessary and illegal noise made by motor cycles.

Having done as much as possible on that, there is also the question of what happens when one finds a person who has a vehicle component which does not meet the construction and use regulations. Perhaps it once did but has been modified by age and use or deliberately to produce excessive noise. It seems that vehicle rectification would work as well as it does on other vehicles which are found to be unsafe, although not to the extent that they need to be immediately prohibited. Making a vehicle meet legal requirements is better than tying up the time of courts and the police officer involved. Mr. Osborne's suggesting is being used and I am sure that people will consider taking it further.

A question arose on consultation and how we might proceed. Obviously I do not need to remind my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch that the Bill gives the Secretary of State powers to make and lay regulations. We consult the trading standards officers and Customs and Excise, and everyone is agreed that there will be no problems over powers. My hon. Friend wanted that assurance.

My hon. Friend also asked about finance. Obviously trading standards officers would like to have more funds. Most people in the public service would like to have more resources and most would also like to have more pay. All hon. Members will understand that general plea. It is worth saying that trading standards officers already visit motor cycle accessory shops in the course of their duties. The additional task of checking that exhaust systems meet the law will be fairly marginal, and I do not think that it will cause an enormous problem.

My hon. Friend asked about publicity. There is substantial interest in and support for the Bill in the trade and motor cycling community which will do all it can to publicise the Bill. The motor cycle industry is well organised—both importers and retailers. Together with wholesalers, they will ensure that the information is passed on.

My hon. Friend referred to the possibility of a general election in the next 13 months. He has wisely enlisted the interest of Lord Bottomley of Middlesbrough. I am sure that their Lordships will not find the disguise so complete that they think I have moved up to join them. It may be worth saying that Arthur Bottomley, as most of us know him, and I have been confused on several occasions. I normally accept the invitations I receive that are meant for him and he normally turns down the ones he receives which are meant for me. The classic case was when Conservative central office asked him to open the Conservative fete at Thurrock. He said he did not want to and was then told that Mrs. Thatcher paid great attention to who opened Conservative garden fetes in Thurrock and that, by the way, there was a charity marathon and would he run the last five miles with the runners as it would do his future in the party a great deal of good. He then

explained that he had been a Privy Councillor and a Labour Cabinet Minister, that he had no intention of running five yards for the Conservative party, and that perhaps the office should approach me.

Mr. McNamara: The Minister is doing well — 21 minutes so far.

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me that I should spend a little more time on perhaps the most expensive general election promise ever made. Perhaps we can return to that on some other occasion.

Mr. McNamara: A fulfilled promise, unlike the Government's promise on the National Health Service.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman also refers to the decision announced yesterday to meet in full the review body's recommendation on nurses' pay, and I am grateful to him for welcoming what the Government have done.

In Committee my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch took us through the main features of the Bill and I intended to make a public apology to him again. In Committee he spoke about the Dykes Act and today we were grateful to see my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) present for the debate. In Committee my hon. Friend said in relation to the Dykes Act that we

"took the first hesitant steps in coming to terms with the severe, anti-social nuisances which can be caused by manifestation of the internal combustion engine."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 11 March 1987; c. 19.]

That was a series of polysyllabic words which drew a gasp from me which was perhaps rightly interpreted by *Hansard* as me saying, "Who wrote that?" I was not in any way suggesting that that had not been written by my hon. Friend.

The reference to *Hansard* reminds me that Peter Walker of *Hansard* invited me to go on Budget day to Ripley to meet the Wey valley advanced motor cyclists, a group within the Institute of Advanced Motorists which has provided great support for the Bill. Throughout the country active motorists anxious to promote all that is good about motor cycling and to reduce all that is bad have supported the Bill. It is to be welcomed that throughout the land responsible motorists have lent that support.

We can go into other issues about motor cycling on other occasions, but perhaps it would not be out of order for me to say that I welcome the reduction in the casualty rate. Obviously the number of casualties is related to the number of people who motor cycle. Yesterday we announced that motor cycle casualties, including moped and scooter users, had fallen by 8 per cent. because of a reduction in motor cycling. That has reduced the actual casualty rate by 3 per cent., which is welcome. What is not welcome is the fact that there were some 750 deaths, 15,000 people were seriously injured and there were 36,000 slight injuries. That makes a total of those involved in accidents of 52,000. We need to promote the interests of motor cyclists and motor cycling, and the Bill does so in reducing noise pollution.

I am grateful to all hon. Members who have helped to bring the Bill to this stage. The Government hope that it will receive its Third Reading today, move to another place and, if possible, be enacted. In that way, the industry will be prevented from being tempted to fit illegal exhausts, we shall find life quieter and more pleasant, and people will be able to take up motor cycling without damaging the interests of others.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

11.46 am

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I would like to thank my supporters in all quarters of the House for their help, above all, in passing the Bill through the House without amendment. I should particularly like to thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces and all the officials in his Department for the tremendous help that they have afforded me as a Back-Bench Member in preparing the Bill and piloting it through Parliament.

The Bill will confer clear benefits on all members of the armed forces who in future suffer injury or death in peacetime in the course of their duty, as a result of negligence by another. Once the Bill is passed, they will be on an equal footing with civilians and will no longer be discriminated against in terms of compensation for themselves or their dependants.

However, even after the Bill, for at least one category of injury or death proper compensation will not be available. I should like to address this point before the Bill moves to another place. This case is one of pure accident, where no one could be held to have been negligent and where the individual concerned was not regarded as having caused or contributed to his injuries.

One such case would be that of Sergeant-Major Ken Yeoman, who was a senior non-commissioned officer and an instructor with the Red Devils at Aldershot. He is known to several hon. Members because he was one of the instructors for the group which came here to do a charity jump some five or six years ago in aid of the Airey Neave Memorial Trust and cancer research.

Shortly after that, the parachute of a soldier who was taking part in a jump failed to open. Sergeant-Major Yeoman, who jumped from the aircraft in the same stick of parachutists, immediately realised the problem and, regardless of his own safety, grabbed his colleague and held on to him with all his strength. By his exemplary bravery he saved his comrade's life but, sadly, at terrible cost to himself. As a result of the injuries that he received on landing, Sergeant-Major Yeoman was medically discharged from the Army and will be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Some months ago, we had the pleasure of entertaining him at the House.

According to the legal advice that I have received, although I am no lawyer, even if the Bill had been enacted at the time of that incident, Sergeant-Major Yeoman would not have qualified for compensation because his injuries were not incurred through negligence but, it would be claimed, voluntarily in that he could simply have allowed his comrade to fall to his death while landing safely himself. However, his colleague, whose injuries were only minor, may have been able to sue the packer or manufacturer of the parachute for negligence and obtain compensation under the terms of this legislation.

That case outlines a clear gap that will exist in the framework of compensation which is available to members of the armed forces, even after the passage of the Bill. In those circumstances I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who has been able in his handling of the Bill and helpful to the Committee and myself in assisting its passage through the House, to ensure that full consideration is given to the possibility of providing an insurance policy which would cover all members of the armed forces and guarantee full and comparable compensation in cases such as the one that I have described where negligence cannot be proved. The number of such cases in any year would be tiny, so the cost of the insurance policy to the Ministry of Defence would be small.

I am sure that the Minister and the House would agree that it is unacceptable that members of the armed forces who risk or sacrifice their lives to save those of their comrades should be placed at a serious disadvantage in terms of compensation. Such courage, self-sacrifice and comradeship are qualities that are to be found in a greater measure in members of Britain's armed forces than in any others. Their qualities are of inestimable value in battle and can be decisive in the outcome, as we saw in the brilliant exploits of 2 Para at Goose Green against an enemy three times its number which was dug into defensive positions. Such qualities go to the heart of the high calibre and morale of Britian's armed forces and are to be encouraged. I trust that the Minister will find a way of doing that.

In Committee, the case for retrospection was discussed at some length. I am the first to acknowledge the debt that is owed to those outside the House who have campaigned for so long to secure the abolition of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act. I am delighted that their efforts are on their way to a victorious conclusion. But I also recognise the bitter disappointment that there must inevitably be among what has become known as the section 10 victims and their dependants that this Bill is not to be—in my view, cannot be—retrospective.

It is true that Parliament has traditionally resisted retrospection but it is also true, as was so forcibly argued by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), that there have been several notable exceptions to that rule. Those exceptions almost invariably have been to confer a retrospective benefit rather than, as would be the case if this Bill were to be made retrospective, to impose a retrospective liability. For this reason, I accept that the Bill cannot be retrospective.

An example is the hypothetical case of a corporal who 30 years ago may have caused or contributed to the death of a comrade through an act of negligence. Would it be right, even in the interests of providing better compensation for the victim or his family, that after so many years that corporal should face the ordeal of having the whole matter reopened and find that he now has a legal liability for his actions of 30 years ago when none existed at the time of the incident?

I make no apology for repeating once again that the Government, having acknowledged the injustice of section 10 as it has operated in recent years, by their decision to abolish it have, by the same token, recognised that members of the armed forces killed or injured in peacetime in recent years have received inadequate compensation compared to what would be available to their civilian counterparts. In so doing, the Government have made an unanswerable case for reviewing those past cases and ensuring fair levels of compensation. This is why I urge my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to explore with his colleagues the possibility of establishing a compensation fund of at least £100 million, as was done some 10 years ago in the case of the victims of pneumoconiosis in the

mining industry. Such a fund would be administered by a tribunal to which those who have been inadequately compensated, or who in some cases have received no compensation at all, may apply for an ex gratia payment.

I cannot fail to refer to the largest category of those who have received no or inadequate compensation — the victims of Britain's nuclear test programme. The Minister assured us in Committee that the report of the National Radiological Protection Board, which was due by the end of last year, will definitely be available before the end of this year. In the event that the report shows, as many of us are convinced it will show, that among the 20,000 British service men who took part in those test programmes there is a significantly higher than average incidence of cancer, leukaemia and other radiologically induced diseases, I find it inconceivable that the Government would not wish to move swiftly to provide full and fair compensation for those whose health has been destroyed in the course of their service to their country.

An assurance by the Government in this regard would be most welcome, especially by those families who in recent years and to this day have had, or are having, to endure the horror of seeing a husband or a father become a living skeleton and die in terrible pain and distress. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues to consider seriously the obligations that we have to this category of British ex-service men. If I have been able to play some small part in remedying a serious injustice to our service men in the years ahead, I will be only too delighted.

I pass this Bill, I hope with the approval of the House, on to their Lordships' House and into the capable hands of my noble friend Lord Gisborough. I am highly confident that he will carry the Bill forward to the statute book. I am confident that in the years ahead the Bill will provide the proper levels of compensation that all of us, in all quarters of this House, wish to see for those who serve their country so selflessly and well.

12 noon

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his admirable efforts on behalf of the Bill and on his successful navigation of the Bill through the shoals and reefs of the House of Commons.

This Bill is a notable landmark for the armed forces and sweeps away the injustice and discrimination against them. It gives historic new rights to the armed forces to sue for negligence. That means that service men and women who risk or give their lives in our defence will exercise the same rights as the rest of society — the right to deter negligence and the right to take legal action if negligence occurs that results in their disability.

If I may enter a caveat, I am rather sorry that the hon. Member for Davyhulme did not pay adequate tribute to the campaigners for the Bill. Quite honestly, we would not have this Bill without the efforts of Mrs. Carol Mills of the Section Ten Abolition Group, Ken McGinley and Sheila Grey of the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, Tom Armstrong of the British Atomic Veterans Association and all their colleagues. This Bill is the result of their persistent efforts. I believe that many of us would concede that, without their efforts, we would not have the Bill. Time and again the Ministry of Defence has opposed the proposals put forward by the campaigners — Members of this House and people outside. Thus the Bill is a tribute to their efforts as well as the efforts of the hon. Member for Davyhulme.

For some years those campaigners faced a lengthy and determined rearguard action by the Ministry of Defence, but they prevailed because they had justice on their side. However, the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary have always given us an extremely fair hearing. I am delighted at the decision that they have made, and I warmly welcome and support the Bill.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme has mentioned retrospection. I must tell the Minister that I feel passionately angry that those service men and women already disabled by negligence are excluded from the Bill. It is wrong that they should be excluded; they should have been provided for. The hon. Member for Davyhulme was right to refer to retrospection because, by excluding such people, we are perpetuating an injustice. We simply cannot allow them to be excluded from this Bill; something must be done for them.

I am extremely glad that present members of the armed services are to have new rights, but we cannot exclude those people who have been disabled as a result of negligence and who are now suffering. Something must be done for the atom test veterans and all those people already disabled.

The Bill is a base on which we intend to build to provide rights for people, including atom test veterans, who are already disabled. I see this Bill as a launch pad from which we intend to campaign for justice for those service men and women already disabled. That battle will be fought in this House, in the House of Lords and outside Parliament. It is a battle that will be won.

I commend the Bill to the House. I am delighted with the new rights, but I give clear warning that this is only the beginning of a new campaign to secure these rights for service men and women who are already disabled. That campaign begins today and will be continued until it is successful.

12.5 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). I was fortunate enough to support him in a private Member's Bill last year when he was equally lucky in the ballot but his Bill did not reach the statute book. On this occasion my hon. Friend had the wisdom and good fortune to pick an issue on which there is all-party agreement to redress a grievance which came into being out of good will and good intentions in 1947. It is clear that the intention then was not to discriminate against service men. Conditions and circumstances were different then. We hope that this measure will lead to the further diminution of Crown immunity in many other settings.

I also congratulate the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on all that he has done. I certainly endorse his remarks about the Section Ten Abolition Group. I became involved through a constituent in Haslemere who approached me two years ago. Since then I have followed the matter closely and I attended the launching of the Section Ten Abolition Group at a meeting in the House of Commons. I took up my constituent's case with the Minister and his predecessor.

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

It is broadly accepted that there is no justification for service men and women being treated differently from their civilian counterparts who risk their lives or are killed.

I hope that the Bill will not lead to many court cases. I cannot help but observe that there seems to be no human adversity or misery that does not benefit the legal profession. There can be no justification for continuing the previous regime.

I warmly support what my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said about the establishment of a special fund. I accept the argument about retrospection. A retrospective benefit is one thing but to impose liabilities on another service man retrospectively could be damaging and lead to great difficulties.

My constituent to whom I have referred has, I am sad to say, died. His family tell me that his wish was that present and future service men should not suffer as he did.

The battle has been well fought. A special fund administered by a tribunal to ensure fair treatment to the injured seems satisfactory and reasonable.

I wish the Bill well. I hope that it manages to complete the course speedily, in view of other matters on the horizon. I congratulate once more my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, the Minister and all those who have helped to bring to an end an unjustifiable injustice.

12.8 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester): I represent a garrison town and I am chairman of my party's defence committee. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). It is pleasant to see the House working well across party lines in such a matter. I ask the Minister to consider the possibility of helping further categories of people.

I do not object to retrospective legislation that confers a benefit. If a way can be devised to help those who have been injured in the past, without infringing the principle that it should not create retrospective obligations or liabilities, there can be no objection to retrospective legislation. I congratulate my hon. Friend and the Members of the Opposition who have brought forward the Bill, and I hope that it will have a speedy passage through its remaining stages.

12.11 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I join my colleagues in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on bringing before the House a Bill that rights a serious grievance that has existed for too long.

I should declare an interest, in that I am a solicitor. When I first qualified, one of my first major jobs was representing a service man who had received serious spinal injuries in a car accident while being driven by a colleague in the forces. It was only the fact that the accident occurred while they were off duty that entitled my client to what were then record damages. It has always seemed to me utterly anomalous that, if the same accident, in the same circumstances, with the same people, had happened while they they were on duty, the man would have had no access to the courts for damages of that kind.

I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on his skill in steering the Bill thus far. As a solicitor, however, I think that the skill that he has demonstrated has been marred by his off-the-cuff comments about lawyers who operate in these areas. Although I have not practised in this area for a long time, I can assure him that, although it is easy for politicians and others to get cheap laughs from attacking lawyers, in the main, lawyers who operate in this field are highly motivated towards their clients, often make lifelong friends of them and want to achieve the best for them.

If some cases look expensive and go to court, that is because the law was ill-defined and contained too many anomalies. The overwhelming majority of cases, in which matters are relatively straightfoward, are settled by the parties long before a court hearing. I hope that my hon. Friend will take this opportunity of withdrawing his rather intemperate comments. I fully share his hope that few cases will go to court if the Bill is adequately drafted.

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for allowing me the opportunity, not to withdraw my previous remarks, but to make it clear that it was certainly not my intention that they should be taken to apply to the legal profession in general. I was expressing my anger about the fact that, in the context of the way in which it was intended that compensation should operate under the Bill, half of the £20 million to be set aside by the Government was to be swallowed up in legal fees. I believed that that was not the wish of the House, so I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister took the matter away and returned to tell the Committee that he had halved the prospective legal bill. If my remarks were somewhat intemperate, at least they had a worthwhile result.

Mr. Batiste: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has put his comments in context. The substantial legal costs that are often incurred in civil injury claims arise from the fact that many insurance companies make realistic offers later rather than earlier; so the Government will easily be able to slash their legal bill dramatically if they make realistic offers and settlements sooner, rather than waiting until they are on the doorstep of the court—something that happens all too often nowadays.

I wish to refer briefly to three matters on which I should like assurances in the hope that we can remove possible areas of ambiguity so that when claims arise there will be clear guidance from the Minister on the attitude that the Government will take. On Second Reading and subsequently, there were commitments from the Minister that the Crown will stand behind all service personnel who are sued in claims for negligence. We must consider carefully the scope of that, and I hope that we shall have an assurance that the Crown will stand by personnel, even if they are acting outside the scope of their orders and not operating within the authority delegated to them by the Crown. I should also like some guidance on what would happen in the increasingly frequent undertaking of joint exercises with other military forces, where the negligence that results in injury to the service man may, at least in part, be caused by service men of forces other than those of Britain.

The second area in which I seek clarification is the commitment made on Second Reading that the right to sue for negligence and to obtain damages would be in addition to the no-fault payments that are made already in the services. Am I right in understanding that there will be a global sum that will be the higher of the two and that the lower will be offset against it? Some clarification is needed on that score.

The third area is that of evidence. The preparation of any claim for negligence depends greatly upon the disclosure of evidence by the party in whose hands that evidence rests. It is clear that it will be the Crown that will hold the evidence in the majority of cases, and I am not clear how the production of such evidence will interact with, for example, official secrets legislation and the attitude of the Crown in saying that certain evidence and documents will not be disclosed because they involve the national interest. The "national interest" is a broad term that can be extended to include almost anything. There will clearly be much litigation if documents are not produced that are necessary to establish in reality the evidence of negligence or otherwise.

We must consider also the vexed question of retrospection. When we remedy a grievance from a certain date, the contrast between those who benefit from the new legislation and those who have suffered but cannot benefit from it will become increasingly severe and increasingly more pointed as the years pass. I understand the thought processes that mean that there is no provision for retrospection built into the Bill, but there is nothing to prevent the Government from dealing with cases in the past on an ex gratia basis once the new principle of law has been established. I hope that the Government will address themselves to doing precisely that.

I conclude by commending my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme on introducing the Bill. I hope that it will have a speedy passage through its remaining stages in Parliament.

12.18 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I hope that the House will forgive me if I repeat a statement which has been made by every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate; it would be remiss of me if I were not to do so. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on the expeditious way in which he has conducted the Bill through the House. I hope that it will pass through the other Chamber with equal speed and success.

The House will be aware that I welcomed the Bill on Second Reading. I recognised that it was a piece of legislation that was required urgently to put right a deficiency within the armed forces. I welcomed it also in a personal sense because my youngest son is a regular member of the armed forces. His engagement in the Royal Air Force is in the safety equipment section, which deals with items such as parachutes, life rafts and other pieces of safety equipment that the armed forces operate so efficiently. Since my son's engagement, I have become more conscious of the possibility, remote though it may be, of an accident taking place, sometimes not by negligence but by pure chance. Negligence can occur that is not deliberate, and I have become more conscious of that because of my son's involvement in a safety equipment section. It has heightened my awareness of Parliament's responsibility to ensure that those who suffer because of some form of negligence, whether deliberate—I am sure it would not be deliberate—or accidental, should be properly compensated. That is why I welcomed the Second Reading and my membership of the Standing Committee.

I was torn in half over the matter of retrospection. I sincerely say to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) that I wanted to support the views that he put forward in Standing Committee, but it was with a heavy heart that, having thought deeply and seriously about the issues, I could not support him, and I apologise for that. I hope that he will understand the concern that one must also have for the implications of such a measure.

I was extremely relieved to hear that the Minister, and, I am sure, his successors, whoever they may be, will review old cases with characteristic sympathy.

I remind the House that my constituency of Norwich, South is in the heart of East Anglia. That area has strong and long associations with the armed forces. East Anglia still has many American and British air force bases. We also have strong Army attachments. Many of my constituents and others in Norfolk and other counties of East Anglia have served the armed forces with distinction. They have suffered the trials and tribulations of a world war and have suffered because of past negligence. I do not know of any particular cases with which my constituents consider that I could help, but when the Bill is on the statute book I shall gladly help. The Ministry of Defence is sympathetic to my constituents' problems.

I raised on Second Reading the matter of legal costs. I am encouraged to know that expenditure on legal costs will be examined carefully. I hope that the money that is saved by doing so will be used to enhance the compensation that is paid to those who have suffered damage and grievance during past service under the Crown. With great respect to the legal profession—I hold it in high esteem—I would prefer that money to go to proper compensation to alleviate the problems that have occurred in the past, rather than to go to the legal profession. I am sure that there is plenty of other litigation with which members of the legal profession can occupy their minds.

It has been a pleasure to have served the Committee and to have made a modest contribution to the Bill. It has been a pleasure to play a part in what will be a sensible, worthwhile, and welcome Act of Parliament.

12.24 pm

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I support the Bill and warmly join in the congratulations that have been proffered. I have a particular interest in the Bill, as a recent constituency case suffered from this specific problem.

I should like to make two points for consideration by the Minister. As a lawyer, I disclose an interest in this matter and know the cumbersome and lengthy procedure that inevitably takes place in civil litigation for personal injuries. This Bill seeks to simplify the procedures and I hope that it will soon be passed into law.

Will there be provision for any interim payments pending the completion of litigation? Experience has shown that insurance companies play cat and mouse with plaintiffs. As one hon. Member said, insurance companies make inadequate offers in the first place, and from the date of the issue of the writ, through the lengthy proceedings of pleadings and interlocutory processes, discovery, interrogatories and so on, until the case is listed in the courts, one, two or even three years may elapse.

In view of the gravity of the cases that will be brought under this scheme, do the Government have in mind interim payments to the injured service man pending the hearing of the full case? I do not trust insurance companies. Whatever sum is set aside, and however it is divided between the legal costs and the sum available for the payment of damages to the injured service man, the insurance companies will look at it purely as a commercial

[Mr. John Ryman]

proposition and will only make available sufficient money on a payment into court basis pending the hearing of the full case.

Payments into court are influenced by considerations of legal costs and not by sympathy for the plaintiff. Do the Government envisage an interim payment scheme for the service man, so that pending the issue of the writ and the ultimate adjudication by the tribunal he will have a substantial sum available?

Perhaps my second point should be linked with civil litigation and personal injury cases generally. Many years ago a Royal Commission headed by an eminent Law Lord recommended no-fault insurance compensation. That has been debated in the House and in the House of Lords on many occasions. There is all-party agreement that it should be brought in, thereby in effect abolishing much of this litigation by making it unnecessary. Does the Minister envisage that this type of litigation enabling a cause of action to be brought by a service man will come within the framework of machinery where no-fault compensation can be considered?

Where a service man has been injured in the circumstances outlined by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and an acceptance of liability is made by the Ministry of Defence, why is there a need to go through the whole machinery of litigation and the cat and mouse game played by the insurance companies? These two points, interim payments and no-fault compensation, are worth considering.

12.28 pm

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): I am glad to have the opportunity to say a brief word in congratulating and thanking all concerned. I congratulate and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) for promoting that Bill, and the Government for the attitude that they have adopted towards it. I congratulate the House on being, it would seem, about to do something useful, albeit within a limited sphere.

I was just in time to hear two comments about legal matters. In connection with legal expenses, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will bear out that it was the lawyers who first expressed alarm at the proportion of money that it was said would go on legal expenses. We have no desire whatever to see an undue proportion go in that way. Our desire is the same as that of every other Member of the House, to see that those who are covered by the Bill get adequate and good compensation.

On the point made by the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman), I should have thought that most of the cases would be for personal injuries and would be covered by order 29 of the rules of the Supreme Court, which allows the making of interim payments. My purpose is simply to echo what so many others have said. I am glad to add yet another voice, as I believe that this is such a good little measure. It will fill a gap about which many of us have felt very strongly. I congratulate everyone concerned — the promoter, the Government and the House.

12.30 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The lawyers seem to be making confessions about their interests. Let me make a confession as someone who once taught law. When I was teaching tort, there was always a little subsection in the problem in which I included one party as a serving soldier to see if the students remembered another lecture that I had given on the immunity of the Crown. My notes — if they still exist — will have to be amended. However, I trust that if we have a Labour Government they will never have to be used.

I welcome the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) with two and a half cheers, not with three, for reasons that I shall give shortly. As a House, we should join my right hon. Friend for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) in congratulating the Section Ten Abolition Group on its tremendous work in raising the issue. The group must have mixed feelings about seeing the issue coming to fruition. Its members felt the necessity to remedy the anomaly based on their own unhappy experiences. However, in remedying the issue for the future, the Bill does not go any way to meet the sufferings endured by their friends or relatives, which led to the campaign.

With regard to nuclear veterans, we have had an undertaking that the results of the survey will be announced by the end of the year. However, it is, after all, only a statistical survey. Some of us are still at a loss to understand why there must be a statistical survey, as that will take a long time to monitor and to reach conclusions about. We are not considering individual sufferers or complainants; we are merely considering a statistical exercise.

I have given the Bill only two and a half cheers because of its lack of retrospection. There is undoubtedly a difficulty with a Bill that might impose a liability on a past or current service man for something which he thought had gone from his life, an action which he may have regretted and which he felt had been dealt with, but a retrospective benefit would be provided for those service men who had suffered.

I hope that two things will arise. First, we have heard the example of the pneumoconiosis fund and the way in which it has worked retrospectively. I hope that for those who have suffered as a result of being present at the atomic weapons tests a similar fund will be established to meet their particular problems. In Committee the Minister gave an undertaking that the Ministry would be reviewing old cases. It would be helpful to the House if we knew how many cases are involved and what length of time the Ministry considers will be necessary for this purpose. There is still much unhappiness, shared by the nation as a whole — another example is the pensions given to widows of former service men — about the glaring anomalies and stark unfairness between what went before and the position after the House has remedied the grievance.

The House owes a debt to the hon. Member for Davyhulme for introducing the Bill. Although one would have liked the Ministry to have introduced it, the hon. Gentleman dealt with it skilfully, and his relations with hon. Members on both sides of the House, especially my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, were exemplary. He gave great consideration to representations made by outside interest groups and deserves, and must have, the congratulations of the House. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate he will hold out some hope to former members of the armed forces who have been invalided out and who have suffered

as a result of negligence, and will go some way to meet the points made by hon. Members on both sides of the House with regard to re-examining old cases and the possibility of providing improved compensation.

12.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): On behalf of the Government, I welcome the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and strongly support its speedy passage through the House. I hope that it will have similar all-party support and a speedy passage through the other place.

The purpose of the Bill has been spelled out clearly. It gives a right to service men and women—a right that has been denied them for the past 40 years—to sue other service men and women and to show the courts that there has been negligence. In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), I confirm that the Crown will stand behind those service men and women who are sued where their actions were carried out in the course of their service duties.

I am pleased that the Bill has received all-party support. Although I have only limited experience of parliamentary proceedings, I believe that this shows Parliament at its best. I pay tribute to the sustained campaign of lobby groups, such as the Section Ten Abolition Group, and Members of this House and of the other place, led by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme. It is also important to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my ministerial colleagues. They should not be portrayed as having been brought kicking and screaming to the Dispatch Box to support the Bill. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) did not portray them in that way, but for the record I emphasise that the Ministry of Defence has been in no way obstructive. Ministry officials carried out a detailed study of the pros and cons and the implications of repeal of or amendments to the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, and only after that analysis had been made could Ministers consider the issue and reach a decision. As shown by the introduction of the ex-gratia payments scheme from 8 December last year, Ministers have contributed to progress in this area, and my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme and the supporters named on the front of the Bill have played their part in facilitating its speedy passage.

Mr. Ashley: I am anxious to avoid a clash, but I must set the record straight. On occasions such as this, we tend to use soothing syrup and to obfuscate the issues. The fact is that the Government and the Ministry of Defence have consistently refused to give way on this subject. Pressure was applied time and again and is recorded in parliamentary answers and in letters to me in which the Ministry has repeatedly said, "No. We cannot give these rights to service men and women." There is absolutely no doubt about that. I do not want to bicker, but that is how the record stands. Even with the efforts of its sponsors, the Bill would never have seen the light of day without a sustained campaign by the men and women who have been disabled and who are now excluded from the Bill. That is quite wrong, and there is no justification for the Minister's statement.

Mr. Freeman: I think that I am agreeing with the right hon. Gentleman. I paid tribute to those who have drawn the attention of the House and successive Governments to the need for reform. I cannot speak for previous Administrations, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that this Government have acted. We have given strong support to the Bill and have played our part in introducing the ex gratia scheme from the date of the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet asked a number of specific legal questions. He asked whether the Crown would stand behind defendants who were acting outside their orders or the normal scope of their duties. We will stand behind a service man or woman who is sued only if he or she was acting in the course of his or her normal duties. If that is not the case, it will certainly be open to the service man or woman who has been wronged to sue, but he or she must sue directly the service man or woman who he or she claims has acted in an unjust, incorrect or negligent manner. It is only fair for the employer—in this case the Ministry of Defence — to extend his financial guarantee in circumstances where the service man, NCO, or officer was acting in the normal course of his duty and in the lawful fulfilment of it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet asked about joint exercises with a foreign army. He asked what would happen if a service man in a foreign army—perhaps one of our NATO allies — was involved in an accident during a joint exercise. I assure my hon. Friend that we already have adequate arrangements for handling such cases under the international status of forces agreements with which he will be familiar. Those arrangements will continue after the Bill is enacted. I assure my hon. Friend that, in the few instances where I have been involved in dealing with the Governments of our NATO allies, I have always found those Governments co-operative and anxious to resolve the legal issues arising from a claim as speedily as possible. I am sure that that will continue to be the case.

Mr. Powley: Not being a legal person, I am ignorant of the measures referred to relating to exercises with the armed forces of another country. Will the Minister explain? If a German service man involved in a joint NATO exercise with the British Army was negligent and so caused injury to a British service man, would that British service man be entitled to sue the German soldier or army, and would the German army be responsible for the compensation?

Mr. Freeman: The service man would take the matter up through the Ministry of Defence and we would take it up with the armed forces of the country concerned through the status of forces agreement. It would clearly be invidious if in a joint exercise a British service man had the right to sue a British NCO without having the same financial remedy in relation to the armed forces of other countries. Certainly, therefore, we will make the correct representations on behalf of the British service man concerned. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet was concerned about whether evidence would be withheld for reasons of national security, and about the problems which could arise in the submission of evidence to the courts. This should not cause any difficulties in civil litigation. If considerations of national security arise in relation to evidence, arrangements might be devised to ensure that,

[Mr. Freeman]

where appropriate, liability is admitted by the Crown and discussions are allowed to continue on the quantum of damages. If my hon. Friend is not satisfied with that reply, perhaps he will put down a question or write to me, when I shall be delighted to deal with his concerns in greater detail.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) raised two interesting points about interim payments and about the no-fault system. We have every intention of operating an interim payment system where circumstances warrant it, which would clearly include cases in which liability is admitted but where there might be some further discussion. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is thinking of settlement out of court, where there might inevitably be delay in settling the final amount.

I confirm that the Ministry will use the interim payment system, where appropriate, in a positive and constructive way and not in an obstructive way. Commanding officers in the British armed forces have been operating the system since 8 December last. When potential cases arise in which service men or women claim that acts of negligence have been done to them by others in the services, commanding officers know that they must advice wronged service men or women of their legal rights and advise them to obtain proper advice, not from the Ministry of Defence, the Army legal service or the corresponding services in the other two arms, but from civilian lawyers.

If the circumstances so warrant, a soldier will be entitled to receive the same help as any other citizen from the legal aid system. I repeat the commitment that I gave in Committee to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme that the Ministry of Defence will not seek to obstruct the progress of cases by ranging a great battery of lawyers against perhaps just one plaintiff. We shall also seek to reach settlements promptly and, if possible, out of court. That is clearly in the best interests of all concerned.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley also raised the subject of the no-fault system. In a sense, we have had such a system for a considerable number of years. The hon. Gentleman may not be familiar with the details, but under the present system, which the Bill seeks in a sense to modify, whosoever fault an accident is, there is a no-fault payment by the Ministry of Defence and the DHSS. They are both lump sums and annual payments, they are largely tax-free and the annual payments are largely indexed to the retail price index. I believe that this was the point of concern in relation to Sergeant-Major Yeoman, but I shall return to that in a moment.

We already have a no-fault system. Criticism has been made, especially by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on the adequacy of those no-fault payments. My hon. Friend's Bill would give service men the additional right to receive an automatic payment from the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health and Social Services and, in addition, the right to sue in the courts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet asked whether there was true additionality. On Second Reading, I confirmed that the amount of court damages awarded, or the amount of the settlement reached out of court, would be in addition to the no-fault payments, subject in certain cases to an abatement by the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health and Social Security, of the recurring annual amounts. That is in accord with practice in the private sector. However, the damages that the service men would seek in court, or seek to reach in an out-of-court settlement, would be additional. That is the value of the additional right that has been given to service men. They can go to court and say, "In addition to those automatic payments, I want a further sum to right the wrong that has been done to me in terms of the loss of my future employment prospects, and the damage done to my enjoyment of life."

Mr. Ryman *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, if I can finish my sentence.

In 1947, when that legislation was introduced, the then Administration thought that the automatic no-fault payment system was broadly equivalent, in financial terms, to the amounts that the courts would have awarded in the absence of those payments. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) has correctly pointed out, during the past 40 years, court-awarded damages have risen substantially so that service men and, indeed, those in the private sector, if they go to court in cases such as those covered by my hon. Friend's Bill, will receive sums in addition to those that they would have received under the no-fault system.

Mr. Ryman: I am grateful to the Minister for dealing with my two specific points on interim payments and no fault compensation. Will he confirm that service men who avail themselves of the right that will be conferred by this legislation will be entitled to interest on their claims from the date of the cause of action?

Mr. Freeman: I assume that that matter would normally be for the court to decide. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will permit me to reflect on that question, and to write to him with a more considered judgment.

The object of my hon. Friend's Bill is to give a service man the same right that he or any other citizen has in relation to his employer or to the other employees of that employer and to sue for acts of negligence. The same principles will apply to service men in settling damages, and to the Ministry of Defence in determining the amount of damages offered out of court in a private settlement, as would apply in the private sector.

Mr. Batiste: I seek only a moment's clarification on the question of additionality. So far as I am aware, if one goes to court with a civil claim, one makes a claim for compensation for an amount that one can prove, with evidence, that one has lost. One must set against that the receipts that one has received by way of litigation. It is important on this novel principle to know how the no-fault payment would interrelate with that calculation by the court. At first sight, it seems that the court, in assessing civil compensation, would say that there had been a payment by way of mitigation by the no-fault payment. It is important that that interface is clearly defined, so that the Government's intention of giving genuine additionality is carried through.

Mr. Freeman: I entirely accept the spirit of my hon. Friend's intervention. I should like to point out to him that my hon. Friend's Bill seeks to put service men on exactly the same footing as civil servants. A civil servant already has the ability to sue the Ministry of Defence. Someone who is not in uniform can sue us. That person could sue the Ministry of Defence, which is not covered by the

Crown Proceedings Act 1947, and others in the employ of the Ministry of Defence. The same principles that apply to a civil servant will also apply to a service man. The abatement that might apply to the annual payments made by the MOD and the DHSS — both Departments are involved — will not put service men in a different position from anyone else who has the right to sue the MOD or any other Department.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South referred to the central issue of retrospection and the creation of a special fund. All hon. Members will concede that our debates on the Bill have had the value of clarifying the difference between conferring a benefit and conferring a right. The Bill confers a right and consequentially a financial benefit. Many hon. Members have talked about the need to create a system of additional benefits and I shall return to that.

Service men are being put in the same position as any other civilian, and may sue another service man. The Crown will stand behind the service man being sued so long as he acted lawfully in accordance with orders in the course of his duties. That right cannot be retrospective, for the reasons which my hon. Friend gave. He is absolutely correct. We cannot retrospectively confer a right and therefore place a liability on the shoulders of somebody else, irrespective of whether the Crown stands behind the service man sued retrospectively. That is a basic principle of our rule of law and I accept that argument.

Mr. Ashley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Freeman: The right hon. Gentleman shakes his head. He fails to draw the distinction between conferring a financial benefit, through whatever mechanism he cares to suggest, paid by the MOD directly to those who have suffered and——

Mr. Ashley: Does the Minister accept that there are hundreds of cases of retrospective legislation dating from the 16th century conferring retrospective benefits and retrospective rights on people? We are seeking to give retrospective rights to people who will benefit from them. The Minister has already stated clearly that the MOD will pay the costs incurred by the person responsible for negligence, so the whole purpose of retrospection is to benefit the disabled person. The payment will be made by the Ministry, so no burden will be placed on the individual who was responsible for the negligence. There are hundreds of precedents over the past 400 years to that effect. What is wrong with that?

Mr. Freeman: With respect, I must disagree with the right hon. Gentleman. I admit I am not a lawyer, but I cannot think of legislation that has come before the House, certainly during this Parliament, which confers a retrospective right on individuals to sue third parties. In Committee, the right hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members cited the Local Government Finance Bill as a parallel case of the Government seeking retrospective rights. I argued that it was not, and clearly the right hon. Gentleman agrees with me.

Before I come to the separate issue of creating retrospective benefit, I must stress that the Bill confers a right to sue third parties which cannot be made retrospective. The procedure and mechanics are quite clear. One seeks legal advice and goes to court. As the employer, we have said that we will stand behind those who are sued when they have been acting in the normal course of their lawful duties. I invite the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South to give me an example of legislation which retrospectively gives the individual the right to sue others. I cannot think of such an example.

Mr. Ashley: I apologise for intervening again, but as I have been invited by the Minister, my response is this. I have researched this carefully and, historically, there is no direct retrospective legislation which confers the right to sue. I concede that point. However, there is retrospective legislation which provides benefits for individuals. The Minister should use that precedent to provide those rights for service men who have been disabled. That is my simple proposition.

Mr. Freeman: Finally, I think that we are in agreement. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South has conceded that he cannot cite an example which retrospectively grants a right to individuals to sue third parties. However, the right hon. Gentleman has raised a perfectly valid point—I am attempting to deal with that substantive point, which was also made by several right hon. and hon. Members—that some mechanism should be found to make direct payments from the public purse to those who have suffered. I think that I am encapsulating the right hon. Gentleman's point clearly enough.

It is important to recognise that, whatever the criticisms of the present scheme, we have an existing compensation scheme which, as I explained earlier, is automatic and no-fault. In Committee I gave certain commitments, and I repeat the key commitment that I gave — that we will continually review and ensure that the armed forces pension scheme, and the other schemes that the Ministry of Defence operates which involve payments to those who are invalided out of service or who die in service, are adequate in comparison with other public departments and the private sector. That is a most important point. It is a separate point from the subject of the Bill, as the House has agreed. It is a high priority to ensure that the terms and conditions of those schemes are reviewed and uprated where appropriate.

I shall now deal with the specific suggestion of the creation of a fund similar to the pneumoconiosis fund. As I said in Committee, I do not think that one can cite that fund as a parallel case or justification for the kind of special fund or source of funds that my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme has cited. That is because pneumoconiosis is akin to an industrial disease, which, sadly, has affected many coal miners. It is no way similar to the aggregation of cases that would be brought after section 10 is abolished, which are individual cases where wrongs have been done. Each one would be different. Compensation for the effects of an industrial disease is wholly different.

I appreciate the sentiments that my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme has in his heart in suggesting that fund, but the general commitment that I want to give him is that the right way to proceed is through modification and amendment to the existing system of benefits, which compensates those who are injured and those who sadly die and their dependants. He is quite right to call for a review of that system. I can give him an assurance that that is precisely what the Ministry of Defence will do.

[Mr. Freeman]

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) asked about reviewing old cases. For the sake of clarity, I repeat what I said in Committee because there might be some confusion in his mind, for which I apologise if I created it. The benefits paid to those who suffered before 8 December 1986 are governed fairly specifically. There is very little leeway for varying the lump sum or annual payments paid by the Ministry of Defence and the DHSS. The amount paid is very often subject to medical judgment and not ministerial or political judgment. Where there is variation, it is because someone's medical condition has deteriorated since the event.

I did not want to give the hon. Gentleman the impression that I or any other Minister could review a case and change the amount of disability payments. He may have had in mind the redress of grievance procedure, about which I know he has tabled a number of questions in the past few weeks. I make it plain that the redress of grievance procedure and the criteria used within the Ministry of Defence for making payments to those who claim that they have suffered grievance at the hands of the armed forces have not changed and will not change as a result of the Bill. The procedure is a mechanism, under which several cases are still being reviewed, for sympathetically considering all the facts in particular cases. I did not want to give the hon. Gentleman in Committee or give him now any hope that the Bill provides a wholesale remedy to the cases that he and other right hon. and hon. Members have cited.

Mr. McNamara: I do not wish to prolong the matter, but we also spoke about people who may be injured as a result of nuclear tests.

Mr. Freeman: I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I will deal with that after dealing with ex-Sergeant-Major Yeoman's case. In common with all hon. Members, I pay tribute to his bravery in saving the life of another member of the Parachute Regiment and putting himself not only then but for the rest of his natural life in pain and injury. As my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said, it was an example of the professionalism of the British armed forces that we have come to expect but perhaps take too much for granted, although we admire it.

If I have written down correctly what my hon. Friend said, it was that proper compensation is not yet available. I assume he meant additional compensation over and above amounts that ex-Sergeant-Major Yeoman has received and is receiving. It is not a case of ex-Sergeant-Major Yeoman receiving nothing from the Ministry of Defence. I think he was referring to additional damages or compensation sought by someone who would not fall into the category of those who might benefit from the Bill.

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. My words were "full and comparable compensation", by which I meant comparable to what we are providing for in the context of this Bill.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right to refer to the fact that the armed forces pension scheme and the DHSS scheme makes payments irrespective of whose fault a particular accident was, or of the self-sacrifice or bravery of any individual in harming himself to save others. Mr. Yeoman has been in contact with the Ministry of Defence, not with me personally, and I give my hon. Friend a commitment that following this debate I will look at that case and review it most carefully.

I understand that Mr. Yeoman has been advised that the financial value of the benefits that he has and is likely to receive under the present scheme is roughly equivalent to the amount of court-awarded damages that might be payable to him if those injuries had been caused in a negligent fashion.

That is my immediate advice, but I will certainly examine Mr. Yeoman's case with great care and will write to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme. Since this Bill will not deal with that specific case, my hon. Friend has suggested an insurance policy so that the Ministry of Defence, as the employer, might somehow insure against these particular sad and unfortunate examples of injury. In that way we might provide some additional sums. I shall certainly consider that suggestion.

I wish to deal briefly with the point raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) concerning the financial and public service manpower effects of the Bill. I respectfully remind the House that, on the front page of the Bill before us, the paragraph "Financial and public service manpower effects of the Bill" has been amended. The House should be aware that, in Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme sought to insert a fresh draft to reduce the estimate of costs after 10 years of the operation of the scheme from approximately £20 million to £13 million. My hon. Friend did this after he had raised proper questions about the level of the legal costs of Ministry of Defence advisers and the cost of reimbursement to successful litigants. The sum of £13 million, as the so-called steady state cost of his reform, is still an estimate. Although we have had four months experience of the operation of the ex gratia scheme, it is far too early to suggest the likely level of the results of that scheme. I believe that these estimates are, in a preliminary sense, on the high side. Nevertheless, it is far too early to forecast with any accuracy the number of claims and the level of settlements. However, I hope that the amendment is helpful.

In conclusion, I wish to turn to the question put by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, on nuclear tests. The hon. Gentleman asked specifically why there had been a delay in the expected receipt of the report from the National Radiological Protection Board. I confirm again, as I have done two or three times, that the report will be received before the end of this calendar year. I shall explain why there has been a delay, to allay any anxiety on the hon. Gentleman's part. I am aware that the hon. Gentleman and the House wish to return to this matter in some detail at the appropriate time.

The report has been delayed because the board has been comparing the incidence of cancer and mortality among those service men or participants in the tests against a controlled group of the civilian population of the approximate age and sex distribution, but who were not present at the tests. I am sure that the House will readily appreciate that it is sometimes difficult to track down the medical records of the last few members of the sample. The board has said that it is having difficulties in obtaining medical records. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the cancer registration system is, I understand, a comparatively recent reform in our national health affairs.

It is proving a little difficult to complete the sample to an acceptable level. However, Ministers have made it plain to the board that we expect it to redouble its efforts so that the report can be completed and the Government and the House can consider the results. It is much better to obtain the facts before considering the appropriateness of any remedy.

For the sake of clarity, I confirm again that neither protected nor unprotected men were exposed to the hazardous effects of nuclear explosions during the United Kingdom's nuclear weapon test programme. That would have been in complete contravention of the safety policy and philosophy for all our nuclear weapons tests. That is a statement which my predecessors made. I repeat it and suggest that perhaps the right time to return to the issue will be when we have the results of the independent survey.

I welcome the Bill and hope that it has a speedy passage. I have visited units of the British armed forces in this country and abroad since the announcement and I know that the Bill has been greeted with wide acclamation by all ranks. It has had, and will have, no material effect on training standards or the adequacy of training. The Bill is widely welcomed by those who believe that professional soldiers, sailors and airmen should have the same rights as their civilian colleagues who work for the Ministry of Defence. I hope that the Bill receives a speedy passage in the other place.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Access to Personal Files Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause

APPLICATION OF THE ACT TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Secretary of State may by order add to the tables of authorities and of accessible information specified in Schedules 1 and 2 to this Act.—*[Mr. Corbett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

1.15 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I have no wish to delay the House. The new clause is in the nature of a promissory note. I shall not repeat the arguments that were advanced in Committee, but there is widespread all-party support in the House for providing more access to the information held about individuals. If ever there was a time to put an idea into practice, this is it.

The new clause provides new powers for the Minister to make regulations on those matters that were in the Bill as originally drafted. These include benefits and other records, employment records, bank, building society and credit card records, as well as immigration records. It puts down a marker to give the Government of the day the necessary authority to introduce regulations after proper consultation, without the need for another Bill.

We are worried about the Government's opposition to the inclusion in the Bill of references to medical records. There is widespread and overwhelming support in the medical profession for such a provision. The Minister told us in Committee that he believed it best for progress to be made on a non-statutory basis. He said that talks would be held with the medical profession in an attempt to achieve that. I hope that progress is made on a non-statutory basis.

The new clause provides a backstop in case it is not possible to reach agreement, so that the Government of the day can decide whether it is right to take hold of the issue and put it on a statutory basis.

It is unusual in such circumstances for bodies such as the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom, the Royal College of Midwives, the Health Visitors Association, the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the College of Health, MIND and the Patients Association to reach a common view about the need for the citizen and patient to have access to medical records — with safeguards. I hope that the Minister, who heard these matters discussed in Committee, will at least see the sense of what the new clause would achieve.

It is no criticism of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who is the true father of the Bill, to say that it is the way of the world for private Member's Bills to be mauled about, but the hon. Gentleman wants to leave a small footprint on the sand of history. The Bill will take a small shuffle, rather than a small step, forward. I want the Minister to accept that this

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

is the start, and by no means the end, of a process. He should accept the idea of a provision that would make that clear in the Bill.

Our national passion for secrecy puzzles me and many others. In large areas of our lives, we feel it right to deny citizens access to information. The records containing such information come into being when we fall into the cradle, and they are still there when we slip, protesting, into the grave.

At the same time, the people who are generally held in high esteem in the land, and to whom we entrust our secrets—secrets that strike at the heart of our national security—far too often breach that trust. It is perverse to put so much trust in those people and yet be so fearful about giving ordinary citizens the right to examine the records that are kept about them. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to our suggestion and will put down a marker for the future. The Bill is not the end of a process: it is merely the beginning.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): The Government have already set a precedent for access to personal information in the form of the Data Protection Act 1984, for whose passage I was responsible. I do not want to make a party political speech, but those who have been prone to criticise the Government for not moving fast enough on the subject of manual records should be reminded that a Labour Government had ample opportunity to introduce a Bill similar to the Data Protection Act but took no steps to do so. The leader of one of the alliance parties was a prominent member of that Labour Government, but was a tacit supporter of the decision to make no progress in giving people greater access to their personal records. Therefore, it ill behoves Opposition Members to complain about progress being too slow now.

The Conservative Government took the crucial step and gave the citizen access to records about himself that were held on computer. Today we congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on having gone a long way towards putting on the statute book a Bill that extends the right of access to manual records.

On Second Reading I made it clear that the Government did not need persuading of the benefits that can accrue to an individual if he can obtain access to records of personal information. We are also conscious, as any prudent Government must be, of the fact that benefits of that kind have implications for resources of manpower and money. As they say in Lancashire, "You can't get summat for nowt." Extending the right of access to personal information costs money and resources. Let no one be fooled by propaganda that suggests otherwise. If we are extending the right of personal access, we are making a conscious choice to spend resources in that area and to deprive other areas of those resources.

At the beginning of the exercise — the hon. Gentleman could not have been more helpful and could not have been more ready to recognise the difficulty of the Government—we had to be careful about putting new burdens on employers, for example. One becomes sick and tired of those who voice concern about unemployment and yet are prepared to place new burdens on private employers that might have the effect of increasing unemployment. As a Government we had to consider the matter in the round, being anxious to extend the rights of individuals to access to their personal records, but being mindful all the time that too swift progress could impose intolerable burdens. There is no doubt that the practicalities of granting access to manual records are of a different scale from those involved in granting access to computerised records.

In reaching our agreement with the hon. Gentleman we came to the conclusion that the authorities and classes of information to be made accessible should be as they now appear in the schedules. I made it clear on Second Reading that the Government believed that the best approach would be to wait to gain some experience of the operation of the subject access provisions in the Data Protection Act 1984, which come into force in November, before we consider giving wide rights of access to manual records. It was for this reason that we reached agreement with the promoter and sponsors that the scope of the Bill should be narrowed.

In effect, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) was asking, "What is wrong with putting into the Bill an order-making power that does not have to be used? A decision could be made later." Perhaps the machinery within the Bill is appropriate for the sort of records that are mentioned in the schedule, but not the preferred machinery to provide an extension of personal access to other records. I do not know about that, but what is certain is that it seems odd to rush ahead and provide a power to increase the scope of the Bill before we have even seen whether the machinery in the Data Protection Act is the right sort, and before we have experimented to ascertain whether the machinery in the Bill to deal with manual records is the right sort.

The hon. Member for Erdington made an important point about medical records. We found in our useful discussions in Committee that there emerged clear concern about medical records. Many people would like to see progress made in this area. It was the view of Ministers responsible for health policy and myself that greater progress was likely to be achieved on providing access to personal information in medical records—there is no disagreement between the Government and the promoter and sponsors about the desirability of that happening—by following the voluntary rather than the statutory route.

I think that I was able to give an undertaking in Committee that was of comfort to those who have expressed a wish to see swift progress made towards personal access to medical records. I repeat the undertaking that I gave on behalf of my colleagues with responsibilities for health

"that they will enter into talks with the medical profession at an early stage with a view to achieving substantive and timely progress in opening up medical records further on a non-statutory basis."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 1 April 1987; c. 60.]

The undertaking will open the way to important further progress. The principle of access to personal information having been established in respect of computerised data by the Data Protection Act 1984 and in respect of manual records by the Bill is important. There is a need to see how it works out in practice.

1.30 pm

Extension to other areas is best left, the Government believe, for consideration when we have digested what we have done and after due consideration by Parliament.

From the tone of his speech, I know that the hon. Member for Erdington does not propose to press the new clause to a Division but I thank him and his colleagues for having tabled it. It is important that the matter should be ventilated on the Floor of the House, so that the public may know of our concern.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the Minister for his comments. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3

ACCESS REGULATIONS

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 23, leave out 'may' and insert 'shall'.

This is a probing amendment. I do not think that it will come as any surprise to the Minister that the sponsors of the Bill wanted to push the Government a bit further on some of the detail of the commitments that were made by the Government in Standing Committee. The House should and will know, since it has now had an opportunity to study the reused format of the new Bill, that there have been substantial departures from the Bill that was given a Second Reading in the House. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) has already adverted to that fact. We have gone from a Bill that was essentially a substantive measure of 16 clauses and one schedule to a Bill that essentially contains three clauses — although there are five, including the financial provisions and the definitions—and two schedules.

The change from a substantive Bill to an enabling Bill leaves a lot of power in the Government's hands in terms of the subsequent regulations that the new Bill will spawn. The Minister adverted to that point. It is important for the sponsors of the Bill to try to stiffen the Government's commitment as much as possible. That is the purpose of my amendment.

I had an interesting experience when researching the relative meanings of the words "may" and "shall". In my experience, statutes that are passed for the purpose of enabling something to be done are usually expressed in permissive language. I am only a provincial Scottish solicitor, but I have had some experience in such matters. Prima facie, the words "shall be lawful" or "such and such a thing may be done" import a discretion and must be construed as discretionary unless there be anything in the subject matter to which they are applied or in any other part of the statute to show that they are meant to be imperative. That is clearly the position.

I refer the Minister to a passage in the seventh edition of "Craies on Statute Law". The Department should ponder that passage in future. At page 285, under the heading, "'May' sometimes equivalent to 'shall'", it states:

"It is, however, a well-recognised canon of construction, as Lord Cairns said in *Julius v. Bishop of Oxford*"—

I do not think that that is a reference to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), who unfortunately is not able to be with us today--

"that 'where a power is deposited with a public officer for the purpose of being used for the benefit of persons who are specifically pointed out, and with regard to whom a definition is supplied by the legislature of the conditions upon which they are entitled to call for its exercise, that power ought to be exercised and the court will require it to be exercised.'"

That is the end of the quote, but I shall continue the reference to Craies's text because it goes on to quote what Lord Blackburn said. He said:

"The enabling words are construed as compulsory whenever the object of the power is to effectuate a legal right."

In some circumstances therefore it could be argued, and no doubt lawyers will argue, that the use of the word "may" in the context of this Bill would have to be legally considered as "shall". I do concede, however, that in the argument that we had in Standing Committee on this issue, the Minister of State won by a long head in terms of the number of statutes that he produced that use the word "may". I was able to come up with only a sprinkling, but it was a significant sprinkling, of statutes that use the word "shall", and my point was perfectly well made.

I understand, however, that, if an obligation is placed on the Government and in addition they are tied to a time limit and a process of consultation, they could get into an untenable legal position. If they tie themselves to a mandatory period and come across unforeseen obstacles in consultation, they may not be able to comply with their own legislation. That would be absurd. The point discussed in Standing Committee is still valid and needs to be given proper consideration.

As I say, the reason for tabling the amendment is to show that the Bill has undergone major changes. It is no longer a substantive Bill. It started as an ambitious measure, containing provisions to protect third parties, to prevent excessive retrospection and to allow retrospection only in exceptional special cases. It set out carefully worked out procedures and time limits, dealt with exemptions, rights of redress, and appeal procedures and had a wide scope in its schedule. It was so clearly drawn and had been so well worked out not just by me but by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and others before me that it drew an accolade from the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) who said that not for a long time had he read such a clearly written Bill.

I hope that, in the course of making the regulations that will be produced by this new enabling Bill, the Minister of State will be able to draw on some of the work carried out in drafting the provisions of the original Bill. I am sure that he will understand if in the course of debate on this amendment we seek to firm up what is left. I am sure that he will also understand when I say that this is not the Bill that the sponsors wanted. It is now restricted to local authorities and some cynics—I may not number myself among them — will say that central Government are looking after their own interests and piling the hassle factor on to local authorities. That is certainly true in terms of the restrictions in the Bill as it stands.

The Minister of State will understand why we repeat and read into the record again our frustrations about the fact that he said that the Government's objection to this measure was an objection on grounds not of principle but of expediency, time and money. Of course those are important factors, but the sponsors of the Bill believe that an opportunity to make more substantial progress has been missed. More than any other single area, that applies in the area of health.

We noticed carefully the Minister's statement about the Government's position on medical records. That is welcome as far as it goes, but he will understand that those of us who sponsored the Bill do not feel under an obligation not to knock on his door in the future. Perhaps

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

that will not happen in this Parliament, but in the near future we shall certainly return to a front-line attack. Let no one make any mistake about this, that there is a feeling in Parliament, at least in this Parliament — I cannot speak for Parliaments that may be elected in future — that medical records should be embraced within the scope of a measure of this kind.

I was interested to hear the Minister of State claim that the Government have made some progress. That is true. However, that argument can be stood on its head to some extent. The Government made progress in 1980 with the provision of access to education records by taking the power in primary legislation to allow access to educational files. That happened seven years ago, but nothing has happened since. Although it is true that the Government have, to their credit, passed the Data Protection Act 1984, the Minister of State's claim that he is making all possible progress at the best possible speed must be scrutinised very closely. I am sure that the Minister of State will understand that the sponsors of the Bill feel that a valuable parliamentary opportunity has been missed.

I want to consider the importance of the words "may" and "shall" to the undertakings given by the Government in Committee which are certainly welcome as far as they go. In Committee, the Minister of State gave an undertaking that the Government would seek to make regulations in housing, education and social work in Scotland by the end of 1988. He said that the Government would seek to use their best endeavours to do that. He also said that comparable provisions will be made for Northern Ireland, although for technical reasons that must be achieved by an Order in Council and not through the mechanism in this Bill.

The Minister of State gave the same undertaking for England and Wales with respect to education and social work, but insisted on a further qualification for housing for England and Wales. That particular aspect of housing has specific reference and importance to the mandatory versus the permissive provision of the amendment.

An undertaking was given in Committee on 1 April by the Minister of State. With reference to housing records in England and Wales he said:

"this Government will use their best endeavours to make regulations by the end of 1988."

He then said:

"but because of the obligation to consult and the need to make it plain that these consultations will not be mere window dressing, the Department"—

of the Environment—

"wishes me to say that the Government cannot say with 100 per cent. certainty that they will make regulations. However, I can assure the Committee that the likelihood of our failing to make any regulations at all . . . is remote."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 1 April 1987; c. 39.]

We subsequently queried the detail of that commitment. The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction kindly responded to a letter that I sent to him. I should quote two or three sentences from that letter for the information of the House. Referring to the Government's commitment, the Minister said:

"I am writing to let you know that we are fully committed to making all possible progress with the necessary regulations once your Bill is enacted. There will be no back-sliding on our part as you seem to fear.

But an essential part of that progress towards a binding and effective scheme of access is, as you and your co-sponsors recognised, consultation with the local authority associations. This we shall do at the earliest practicable opportunity. We will seek their views on the operational implications of the regulations for their members."

He concluded his letter by stating:

"But it follows that we have to put in a reservation to cover the possibility, however remote, that the Associations might convince us that, even after amendment, the proposed regulations were impracticable. If that were to happen, no Secretary of State could, in good faith, bring such regulations to the House."

I fully understand the Minister of State's difficulty—he is acting as an agent of the Department of the Environment—but the clear implication is that we are talking not about a potential delay in introducing regulations if there are unforeseen difficulties with the consultations, but about regulations becoming impossible to introduce. I do not understand why the Department contemplates such difficulties in relation to England and Wales. The Minister of State said that the Scottish Office had told him that in all three areas in Scotland, including housing, there was no reason why an unqualified commitment could not be given. What is good enough for the Department north of the border should be good enough for the Department in London.

As the Minister of State will know, the practice of granting unfettered access is used increasingly by housing authorities. I have a list, which is not up to date, of more than a dozen local authorities which already allow unfettered access to housing records. They include The Wrekin, South Somerset, Lewisham, Barnet, Birmingham, Brent, Copeland and Ealing. Those authorities are successfully practising what the Department of the Environement is running scared of—if my interpretation of the information that it has given the Home Office is correct.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have expressed warm support for the principle and general approach of the Bill. They may have some difficulties with the nitty-gritty of the detail, but all the local authority associations are already on board. I do not foresee major impediments that would make regulations impossible to introduce. I understand that they may not measure up to the Minister of State's timetable of 12 months—all reasonable people would accept that—but I do not understand why the Department contemplates that the regulations will become impossible to introduce.

Perhaps the most important point is that the Department says that there are difficulties with the consultation process. But that process started on 6 December 1984. The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) sought the views of the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on ways in which public sector tenants could have better access to information on them held in their landlords' files. The Minister replied:

"My Department has today written to the local authority associations, to organisations representing tenants' interests, and to other interested bodies, to seek their views about how such information can be made more readily available. Public sector tenants sometimes believe that their landlords' files contain misleading personal information. In this area, and subject to proper safeguards, they ought to be able to check that mistakes are not being made. A copy of the consultation letter is in the Library."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. *238*.]

The letter, dated 6 December 1984, was sent to local authorities. It advocated the extension of the rights of access by tenants to the personal files held on them by their landlords.

Taking all those factors together, the Bill's sponsors are right to be suspicious of the Department's approach. I do not hold that against the Home Office, because I understand the Minister's difficulty, but we are disappointed that we cannot have more reassurance from the Department of the Environment about the Government's position on housing records.

Clause 3(3) states that the regulations may make different provision for different authorities. The local authorities have said that it would be helpful if the Government made it clear that that can be used only to set up different regulations to apply to different types of authority, such as social work authorities as opposed to housing authorities, and should not be used to apply different regulations within the same class of authorities —for example, housing or social work authorities. I am not making that very clear. I think that the fears are unfounded, but it would help if the Government could say that they intended to set up different classes of records applying to different types of department and not to individual departments within the same class of authority.

The Minister of State may view the amendment prima facie as an unfriendly act. I hope that he will understand that it is motivated by a genuine desire on the part of the sponsors of the Bill to put it on record that further refinement and clarification of the Government's position is needed. The amendment is also intended to make it clear that, if the Government do not use their best endeavours to stick to the timetable that they have given us, a whole series of people, with me at the head, will be knocking on their door and asking why.

Mr. Waddington: I acknowledge the fact that in Committee the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) discussed precedents for the use of "shall" instead of "may". He has nothing to apologise for. He did interesting research and turned up with precedents that few of us realised existed, but he will agree with me that precedents for the use of "shall" are pretty thin on the ground.

The hon. Gentleman raised the important matter of housing records. Our undertaking about the making of regulations in respect of access to housing records in England and Wales differs from the unconditional guarantee in respect of Scotland, and each Department has to make its own judgment on the practical issues that arise. The Department of the Environment examined the possibility — albeit extremely remote — of proposed regulations going out for consultation and being found to be irrevocably flawed. The Department of the Environment was concerned, too, about burdens upon local authorities. Bearing in mind its heavy responsibilities in such matters, it did not feel that it could give absolute guarantees in advance of consultations with the local authority associations. As I said in Committee, the Department of the Environment was anxious to make it absolutely plain that, when it said that it would consult, it meant it, and that the consultations, as I said in Committee, would not be mere window dressing.

These are difficult judgments for individual Departments to make. I must take responsibility for the form of the undertaking, but the hon. Gentleman has acknowledged that various Departments were involved in the exercise. I was the Minister responsible for gathering together the various strands that emerged from the Departments.

My remarks about the Department of the Environment do not mean that that Department would be deterred from making regulations simply because of opposition from local authorities, even if such opposition arose. The Department would step back from doing that only if it was wholly convinced, following consultations, that there was no way of making practicable regulations. That, indeed, is a remote possibility.

As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction wrote to him because he was anxious to reassure him that the Department is fully committed to making all possible progress with the necessary regulations once the Bill is enacted.

In practical terms, the amendment would place on the Secretary of State a duty to make regulations even if the regulations were unworkable. Clause 3(5) provides that regulations are to be made subject to affirmative resolution, so if either House rejected the regulations the Secretary of State would be in breach of his statutory duty through no fault of his own. That would be an impossible situation and entirely justifies sticking to the word "may" and eschewing the word "shall" in a case of this nature.

With regard to clause 3(3), I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Department of the Environment, the DHSS and the Scottish Office have no intention whatever of treating differently individual authorities within any one class of authority as listed in the schedule. To make it absolutely plain, that means that all Housing Act authorities in England and Wales will be treated in precisely the same way, so I hope that the worries expressed in some quarters are fully dispelled. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire for raising the matter again on Report. I hope that I have satisfied him that "may" and not "shall" is the right word.

Mr. Corbett: The Committee ended up accepting that "may" meant "shall" except when it meant "may" and the Minister persuaded the Committee of the Government's view that with regard to education records the Education Act 1980 provided sufficient powers. I should like to raise a further point in that regard. If the Minister cannot answer it today, perhaps he will be kind enough to do so at a later stage.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and I received an intriguing letter from the Universities Central Council on Admissions, known to generations of parents as UCCA, expressing the view that it would be regrettable if the Bill allowed access to the reports prepared by head teachers and used by those making university selections. In an astonishing letter, Mr. Philip Oakley, general secretary of UCCA, stated:

> "Most university selectors when consulted on this matter said they would have grave reservations about the substitution of open testimonials for confidential reports."

No one was talking about testimonials, open or closed. We were merely hoping that the judgments made about admissions to universities would be factually based opinions and statements of fact. I appreciate that, within that, assessments must inevitably be made, but supporters of the Bill maintain that such judgments and assessments

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must be based on something more substantial than hunches, so that people can see why a particular conclusion has been reached.

The letter continues:

"They fear that such testimonials would lose the benefit of the frank, careful, sympathetic advice on each candidate based on detailed knowledge of his or her school record".

That is an astonishing statement. I do not necessarily complain about UCCA, but I must point out that in trying to find out the address of that establishment I noticed from the letter that it operated from behind a box number, which spoke volumes about the view that it was expressing. To be fair, UCCA explained in a subsequent letter that it used different box numbers for different parts of its operation because it helped with the handling of mail. Superficially, however, it seemed highly appropriate in the light of the views that it had expressed.

I should be grateful if the Minister would bear that in mind, because under the original phrasing of the Bill it does not necessarily appear that those records would come within its provisions. If someone is between educational establishments, for example, finishing at a comprehensive school and applying for a place at a university or a college, that person is not, at that stage, in full-time education, in that he or she has finished at one place and has not received a decision whether he or she can go on to university or college. It seems to me — I hope that I carry the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire with me — that it would be quite ludicrous if such records, prepared by headmasters, were excluded from the regulations that will be made in due course. It would be even better if, when preparing those reports to back up applications for university places, headmasters or senior school staff discussed them with the people concerned, before sending off the records.

2 pm

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point, but I cannot give him an answer today. However, I shall ensure that the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is drawn to the point that he has made and that he receives a reply and complete answer to it as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkwood: If the Minister of State will allow me to be presumptuous enough to suggest it, I think that he should go back to the Department of the Environment and ask what progress has been made on the consultations that were started some years ago. I make no complaint about the difficulties that the Minister is in, acting as he is as an agent for the Department of Employment, but he will not be privy to the detailed negotiations that have been going on, or that may have been going on. My information is that that process was started some years ago. I should have expected——

Mr. Waddington *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: I shall ask the Minister another question, if he could deal with it at the same time. Some progress could reasonably have been expected by now.

While I am still on my feet, the other matter with which I am sure the Minister will be able to help me is this. I completely forgot to explain to the House that we had decided to take education completely out of the Bill for the simple reason that that provision already exists for England and Wales in section 27 of the Education Act 1980, and for Scotland in section 2 of the Education (Scotland) (No. 2) Act 1980. Some letters have been addressed to me expressing doubt about whether education has been dropped from the Bill. Therefore, for the avoidance of any doubt, it would be helpful if the Minister could confirm that the undertaking that he has given will make use of the provisions of section 27 of the 1980 English legislation and of section 2 of the 1980 Scottish legislation. It would be to the advantage of the House if the Minister could clarify those two points.

Mr. Waddington: I can certainly help the hon. Gentleman. I am assured that, in relation to education in Scotland, the powers to make regulations under section 2 of the Education (Scotland) (No. 2) Act 1980 are sufficient for that purpose.

I should have mentioned before, and perhaps by way of intervention I can advise the hon. Gentleman now, that the Department of the Environment consultations that were begun in December 1984 were addressed essentially to the general question of access to housing files, and to whether that should be by statutory or voluntary means. The consultations were not concerned with the detailed machinery with which the Department wishes to deal under the regulations.

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4

FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 3, page 14, leave out paragraph *(a)*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 3 and 4.

Mr. Waddington: These three amendments are small technical amendments to the long title and financial provisions clause and are necessitated by the narrow scope of the Bill which now applies only to local authorities, imposes no burdens on industry and does not involve the incurring of expense by a Minister of the Crown or a Government Department.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 3, in title, line 3, leave out 'institutions and persons' and insert 'and'.

No. 4, in title, line 5, leave out from 'information' to end of line 6.—*[Mr. Kirkwood.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

2.5 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I shall confine my remarks to expressing my gratitude, particularly to my fellow sponsor the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), who is unavoidably delayed on parliamentary business overseas. He has been a tower of strength to me and his enthusiasm and skill have been a considerable asset to all the Bill's sponsors in their work. I also thank the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), although he is not able to be present. His sage, philosophical advice has been of great

assistance to me throughout the passage of the Bill. However, I must repeat that we all wished for a somewhat different outcome, but we are thankful for what we have.

It is remarkable that there is now such a wide measure of cross-party support for further progress to be made in this area and I hope that the Government will note that. More than 140 voluntary organisations have helped us to scrutinise the detail of the original legislation which received a Second Reading. I hope that the Government will make use of some of that work in future scrutiny of the regulations that will be spawned by the Bill.

I particularly want to mention the Freedom of Information Campaign and to thank its director, Mr. Maurice Frankle, for his dedication, knowledge and help during the Bill's passage. Certainly, I would be pounds lighter from worry if he had not been ever present at my side. As this is the first time I have had the privilege to introduce legislation, it would be churlish not to thank the House authorities and the staff of the Public Bill Office, especially Mr. Douglas Millar, for their courtesy and their inexhaustible patience with requests made by me as father of this private Member's Bill.

Last but not least, the Minister has had a difficult role, acting as an agent for other Departments and carrying the can. He strikes a hard bargain, but I have always found him to be fair. We were worried earlier that we might sink into mutual recrimination, but I am pleased to report that we have not ever even approached that.

The issue of public access to personal information will rightly continue to generate public interest and debate. The Bill is a worthwhile legislative step. It establishes the principle of access to manual files, which is of importance in itself. It is a small step in what remains a long journey towards a freer, more open society in all aspects of life in Britain today.

2.8 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I support the Bill with greater confidence than I did on Second Reading. Bills such as this tend to be supported only by those who see the matter in black and white. I have always had deep reservations about steaming ahead with wholesale open access to all personal files and I must ask the Minister to oversee the introduction of regulations carefully, particularly those involving exceptions.

The disparaging remarks of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) about the difficulties facing UCCA suggested that he had little understanding of how difficult it is to make a full and frank personal assessment of an individual. Anybody who is trying to make an assessment or keep a record must strike a balance between acting on his own judgment based on evidence and merely producing a document that is full of bromides and inanities. The danger is that open access to personal files can result in the use of the telephone euphemisms or a failure to record sensitive information.

The sector about which I am most concerned is that of the social services with regard to child abuse, potential suicide attempts or any other manner of human behaviour where there seems to be a perfectly straightforward explanation, but the professional involved, on the basis of his or her experience, training and judgment, has reason to have grave reservations about the explanation that he or she has been given by the individual involved. Inevitably, in such cases confronting the individual with the professional's reservations is fraught with problems.

None of us would dispute that good practice means openness, but in some cases anybody involved in these decisions will experience difficulties and the thought that inevitably files will be opened and available could too easily lead to euphemisms and a failure to make proper records.

The modifications that have occurred are an improvement. However, I recognise that there is another side to the argument. In Committee examples were given of inaccurate information being incorporated in reports. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) spoke of 18 per cent. of medical records in Oxford being found to have some sort of omission or inaccuracy. In Leicester 1·5 per cent. of the medical records were found to have the sex of the individual wrongly recorded. We all know how easy it is for assertions to be made, for example, by school teachers in the preparation of court reports on the basis of hearsay and reputation. I am not arguing that this is a black and white matter, but it is right and proper to proceed with caution and carefully to monitor the progress.

Much has been made of the possible financial costs of the legislation: there are arguments which I find plausible that there has been an overstatement of the extent to which people will make use of these rights. I take the financial implications with a pinch of salt.

Another important point which has emerged, with regard to the subversion of freedom of information is the way in which some authorities have charged exorbitant prices for making information available. That seems a thoroughly unsatisfactory outcome, but it is what happens to over-idealistic legislation which has not been thought through as to the difficulties and detailed problems of implementing it. In all of my dealings with local authorities the constant refrain is, "Why does Parliament have so many good ideas that we must implement and carry out which require more training and manpower and changing practices?" Recently the police force has had to change its way of working with regard to the information that is at its disposal. I am concerned that if we had proceeded with this Bill on the original basis, the unintended consequences of the well-intentioned aims and aspirations of the sponsors of the Bill would have had effects about which I would have had great reservations.

In supporting the Bill on Third Reading and congratulating all those who have worked so hard to negotiate it as far as this stage, I should like to reiterate once more that the changes and modifications that have occurred along the way are, in my view, improvements.

2.14 pm

Mr. Corbett: I join in the congratulations to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). He knows well enough — he will probably share this view — that this is not the Bill that he, I or many other hon. Members wanted to see being debated and hopefully given a Third Reading and sent on to another place. However, that is the way of the world.

At one point during the Committee deliberations the Minister described himself as an errand boy. I think he put himself down too much because, although we are far apart on detail, his attitude has been to be as helpful as possible. I acknowledge that it was a difficult job collecting views from colleagues in a range of other Government Departments; none the less, we have a record of the assurances he has given the Committee and the House on

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the regulations for the sectors which are the subject of this Bill. We have his word, which I am perfectly happy to accept, that best endeavours will be made to see that those assurances are carried out.

I pick no quarrel with the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) about the need to have sensible exceptions, particularly with respect to sensitive records, whether produced on pupils at school or in any other part of the education system. Nobody is suggesting for a moment that these records should not be frank and well based. This is what the argument is about. One of the aims of this Bill will be to persuade those who readily write these reports and who have to make judgments as part of that process to stop to think whether they can justify what they write. We do not want teachers who are tittle-tattles, because these records follow children the whole way through the educational process. I have seen some, not in the city of Birmingham but elsewhere, with no more than an initial. The teacher who put that piece of paper in the file may be untraceable because he has long since changed schools, or could have gone to a different part of the country. It is that to which we object.

We hope that the discretion that will be exercised within this Bill will lead to better record-keeping and to records that will assist. After all, the keeping of these records in these sectors and those in the Bill as first published is all about trying to make the syste more efficient. They are supposed to be there to help. They are not there to punish or to chastise.

Derogatory or critical remarks are bound to be made in some circumstances, whether about the behaviour of former council tenants over a property they had 10 years ago and left without paying the rent or about some suspicion that circumstances at home are affecting the learning capabilities or development of a child at school. I acknowledge absolutely that it is right that such information should be recorded, but we are saying that, when it is written down, the person or official doing so must justify to himself or herself, and if need be to the record holder or the record holder's parents, that this assessment or judgment is made in all honesty.

The very worst that will happen under this Bill is that someone will say that he wants to see his social services record. He will pay his 50p, or whatever it might be if there is to be a charge, and, accepting that those judgments in those difficult sectors have been made in a well-intentioned manner, the person concerned could say that the record is wrong and that a mistake has been made. One hopes that he would have a right to attach a comment on a judgment made about him.

I say again to the hon. Lady that, when these regulations are drawn up, proper care has to be taken—perhaps no more so than with social services. The Minister needs no lectures about this. I think that we have all had letters from an organisation called Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Services. I will not read the whole of the letter from the general secretary but the organisation makes the strong point that it thinks that it is wrong to prevent prospective or existing adoptive and foster parents, or anyone who has been adopted or fostered, from having access to the files relating to them to ensure that those files do not contain any inaccuracies. It is critical in this whole adoption process that there is absolute openness because mistakes can be made. However, every sensible step should be taken to ensure that mistakes are kept to a minimum.

The letter continues:

"Many of the subsequent decisions about applicants are made by people other than those compiling the records on the strength of those records."

That is what happens with record keeping. There is a chain reaction, as records do not necessarily stay with the one person familiar with that file, but are passed from person to person within an organisation. In such matters as adoption and fostering, it is absolutely critical that the records are the best that can be maintained.

I hope that the House will give the Bill a Third Reading. I hope that coming events may be delayed long enough to ensure that the Bill reaches the statute book.

2.21 pm

Mr. Waddington: I believe that we are indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) for her contribution to this debate. My hon. Friend has done a useful job in restoring the proper balance. Access to personal files is one of those matters that *The Guardian*, in its usual simplistic way, bills as one that the good support and the bad oppose. It is worth pointing out that it is not as simple as that.

I do not agree with my hon. Friend that the resource implications of access will be minor. Although that may be true with regard to this Bill, one should bear in mind that in Whitehall, as I mentioned in Committee, there are 12 million linear feet of records. The imagination boggles at the idea of people having access to all 12 million linear feet of those records. In the United States, the freedom to information legislation goes far wider than this Bill. That legislation was initially estimated to have cost the Federal Bureau of Investigation about £50,000, but it now costs the FBI £9·5 million a year. It also now employs no fewer than 300 additional staff. To give personal access to records is not as simple or as cheap as some people think.

I give my deep thanks to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for introducing the Bill and for being such a pleasant colleague in Committee. I give my thanks to those who have taken part in our interesting deliberations. I also express my thanks to the civil servants in the various Departments for all the work that they have done. Few people realise how much work goes into the servicing of private Members' Bills—I had no idea until this year. I first came to the House in 1968, but it is only this year that I have been an almost permanent occupier of this place on Fridays. I have not liked it very much, in spite of the good company. However, this year I have learnt how much work goes into each private Member's Bill in the Department concerned.

The Bill before us is a complicated Bill and involved the work of not just one Department but a number. I give my thanks to all those who played a part and, once again, I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

PRESCRIPTION (SCOTLAND) BILL

Considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

Social Security (Cold Climate Allowance) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

2.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): I was looking forward to listening, at least briefly, to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), but perhaps the warm weather on this beautiful spring day has caused the cold climate allowance to be far from his mind.

There are a number of reasons why I believe that a cold climate allowance is inappropriate and unjustified. First, it would breach the fundamental principle that income support and family credit, like the existing supplementary benefit and family income supplement schemes, are national benefits, uniform throughout the country.

Expenditure patterns vary throughout the country according to many factors, of which climate is only one. For example, transport costs vary between areas, as do other costs. If we concede that a special allowance should be made for one factor, it will be difficult to resist pressure for other variables to be taken into account. Even if it were possible to devise a scheme which accurately reflected all the differences in individual expenditure, which I doubt, it would run counter to the thrust of social security reform which is to make the main income-related schemes easier to understand and to administer.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I agree that regionally to vary national benefits would be a retrograde step. The Minister deals with the matter in a genteel fashion, but I am astonished that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) is not in his place, because he has been running a campaign in Scotland on this issue. That he has not turned up for the Second Reading debate on his own Bill is a measure of his interest, which should be noted.

The Government have improved the severe weather supplement this year, but it is still not sensitive enough to meet the needs of people north of the border. I hope that, although the Minister might reject the Bill's proposal, he will consider sympathetically proposals for a better scheme to be operated next year so that people north of the border and elsewhere do not suffer from hypothermia as they did this winter.

Mr. Lyell: I understand the first part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I take the view that the hon. Member for Dundee, East has decided that he is better employed elsewhere than at Westminster, notwithstanding the fact that his Bill is being debated. His absence will help to persuade many of his constituents that he is absolutely right. Before long, we shall learn that he is right.

I reject what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) says about the Government's cold weather scheme, with which I shall deal if time permits. There is no doubt that the extra severe weather scheme is a good scheme.

Mr. Kirkwood: I did not not say that the scheme was good, but that it was better.

Mr. Lyell: The scheme certainly is better. It relates to 63 areas of the United Kingdom. I am sure that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire is a perfectionist. I look forward to his party's proposals for a scheme which relates to 163 areas—or even to 1,063. I should like the hon. Gentleman to have more opportunity for consideration and to intervene on matters of substance rather than humour. The hon. Gentleman might speak later, but first I give him the opportunity to think through his views, and then to develop them.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East still seems reluctant to accept that climate is only one of the factors that affect individual fuel expenditure. Other factors are the size and standard of dwellings, the type of heating system, and the fuel used. Above all, Scotland is not the coldest part of the United Kingdom. Although on average people in Scotland spend more on fuel, their expenditure is lower than that of people in Wales and in parts of England. The figures will be of interest to the House. They show, for example, that while average weekly expenditure on fuel in Great Britain as a whole is £9·27 and, in Scotland, £9·50——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Private Members' Bills

FIXED PARLIAMENTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): With the authority of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 8 May.

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS (PROHIBITION IN ELECTION TIMES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Cohen: With the authority of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 1 May.

PARENTAL LEAVE BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [27 March].

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate to be resumed on Friday 8 May.

DRUG COMPANIES (ACCOUNTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT (PROTECTION OF BIRDS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1986 (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): With the permission of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 1 May.

LONDON GOVERNMENT AND OTHER COUNCILS (ANNUAL ELECTIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Cohen: With the authority of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 1 May.

North Norway Fishery

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It will come as no surprise to the Minister that I raise the subject of the licensing arrangements for the north Norway cod fishery to highlight the plight of my constituent, Mr. Russell Smith, who is the skipper of the fishing vessel Vega, which has not been granted a licence for that fishery.

The Minister and his Department have received many representations on this subject from hon. Members, and from the industry, locally and nationally. The reason for the volume of those representations and for my pursuing the matter on an Adjournment debate is that the refusal to grant a licence to the Vega for that fishery has been widely seen as unjust and likely to cause further undue hardship to its skipper and crew. It is often inevitable when licences are to be granted that there will be disappointments, but in this case a combination of circumstances has put Mr. Smith in a highly unusual position. That is why, after meetings and many representations, I want to make one further plea to the Minister to reconsider his decision.

First, I wish to discuss the purchase of the vessel. The Vega was formerly known as the Arctic Reiver, and was purchased from a company based on Humberside on 30 June 1986. An application for all external water licences went to the local fisheries office in Lerwick in May and was passed on to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland through the Edinburgh office on 29 May 1986. I am advised in a letter of 20 May from the agents acting for Mr. Smith that it was said that they had a client who intended to acquire a vessel and that they were inquiring what the position would be about external water licences. I have been advised and informed by the agents acting for Mr. Smith and by Mr. Smith himself that subsequent conversations between the agents and the Department's officials were of a tenor that did not lead them to believe that licences would not be issued. More specifically, it was indicated that the Arctic Reiver would be treated in the same way as its sister vessel, the Arctic Challenger. The Arctic Reiver became the Vega and it has not been treated in the same way as the Arctic Challenger because it does not have a licence whereas its sister ship has.

I know and appreciate that the Minister and his office have never accepted that a guarantee was given. I accept that no letter was written in which there was a cast-iron guarantee. However, in the light of the conversations that took place with officials from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr. Smith went ahead and made a substantial capital investment in purchasing the vessel and investing a sizeable sum to fit out the boat, to renew certain equipment and to make it capable of fishing in north Norwegian waters. It is a relevant fact that Mr. Smith, on the strength of the conversations with the Department, went ahead with the investment.

Secondly, I believe that the Vega is unique in being the only vessel of its type which has not been awarded a licence. The allocation was decided in England through the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and in Scotland licences were granted by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to the Aberdeen vessels which fished in north Norwegian waters last year. I am informed that 15 out of 16 comparable stern trawlers have been

given licences and that it is only the Vega which has been excluded. The exclusion is extraordinary because of all the vessels concerned it is the one that is geographically most conveniently suited for fishing in Norwegian waters.

The Minister has argued that there were other disappointed applicants, some of whom were perceived by him and his officials to be capable of fishing in the area. Many of the other applicants came from the traditional inshore white fish fleet and there is a question mark, at the very least, over whether they could have fished as far north as the area that is presently under discussion. Many of them were also pelagic vessels, and this year their fishing opportunities have increased elsewhere. It is fair to record also that, according to my information, there would be no objection in Shetland, at any rate to the knowledge of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, from among the other unsuccessful applicants if the Vega were to be granted a licence.

The claim has been made by Ministry officials that there are four English-based stern trawlers capable of fishing in north Norwegian waters which have not been granted licences. A further vessel, the Margaret Jane, has fished in north Norwegian waters. It did so from 1983 to 1985, but it has been refused a licence for this year.

Following the undertaking of some research, it is my information that of the vessels that have been named as being comparable to the Vega, the Boltby Queen is a vessel that can hold only about 1,000 boxes of fish in a relatively small hold. It is accepted that it is a large stern trawler, but it is submitted that it is not suitable for making lengthy trips to north Norwegian waters because of the limited size of its hold.

I understand that the St. Patrick is being purchased by the Marr group and has now been renamed the Gavina. It has received an external waters licence for fishing off north Norway. The Arcomine is understood to be a 95 ft beam trawler currently based in Brixham. Consequently, the vessel is much more suited to fishing in southern and central North sea waters and would be totally unsuited to fishing the distant waters of north Norway.

The case of the Portelois may be comparable. It is accepted that it could possibly be capable of fishing off north Norway. It has not received a licence. There was a question about whether it was a member of the main English Producer Organisation, which I understand was the organisation through which English licences were allocated. The Margaret Jane, which, it is suggested, fished from 1983 to 1985, no longer has a licence. It is a 65 ft Scarborough-based inshore vessel. There is some doubt about whether a vessel of that capability and size managed to fish in north Norway during the years in question.

Those vessels were alleged not to have received a licence. Of greater importance, is there comparability between the Vega and its sister ship, the Arctic Challenger? As I stated earlier, assurances were certainly given that there would be comparable treatment. That has not happened. The Arctic Challenger has received a licence. It is also fair to point out that, even if the Vega were to be included in a Scottish allocation and given the average allocation which would apply, it would be less than what the Arctic Challenger is receiving as its slice of the much larger English quota.

In many respects, the matter goes back to what have been said to be historical rights. The English quota is considerably larger—about three times larger—than the Scottish quota. That is based on historical preference. In this case, the historical issue is in its proper sense. Over many years, particularly through the 1970s, the fish-producing organisation in Humberside managed an overwhelming part of the north Norwegian cod quota.

It is said that one of the reasons for the Vega not receiving a licence is that it has no record of fishing in north Norway waters. The record of the Aberdeen vessels that have been awarded licences amounts to only one year. Compared with the traditions on Humberside, that can scarcely be said to be historic. The Arctic Challenger, the sister ship, has had a fishing record that is similar to that of the Vega. Prior to this year, it has never fished in north Norway waters. It stayed on Humberside, and the Vega went to Shetland. The Arctic Challenger received a licence, but the Vega did not. Again, it would appear that historic rights have been used in different ways on different occasions.

It is of particular concern that such historical rights might, in a sense, be frozen. I should be grateful if the Minister will state whether, if a vessel has not received a licence this year, the fact that it has not managed to build up any historical rights will be used against it in any future year.

I draw the Minister's attention to the circumstances of an English vessel, the MV Arctic Ranger. I am informed that that vessel is substantially Norwegian owned, but it has a United Kingdom external waters licence. Ironically enough, the licence came from the vessel that my constituent, Mr. Smith, sold before buying the Vega. His personal external water licence was transferred. Whereas the wholly United Kingdom-owned Vega has not been granted a licence for north Norwegian waters, a Norwegian-owned vessel has obtained one. It will be interesting to hear how that anomaly can possibly be justified.

I have referred to circumstances that I believe amount to injustice. It is also important to point out that they will cause hardship, not least to Mr. Smith and his crew. Mr. Smith has supplied the Minister with correspondence containing detailed figures to show how the lack of such a fishing opportunity in north Norway waters will imperil the viability of his boat. His returns from fishing North sea haddock and North sea cod will not only fail to provide a reasonable level of income for his 15-man crew but will not generate sufficient income to meet loan repayments, interest charges, maintenance and every-day overhead costs. The north Norway cod fishery would make all the difference to the viability of the boat.

Even if the Minister felt that in order to be fair to the Aberdeen vessels that have received an allocation that allocation should be no less than last year, the balance left in the Scottish quota would make a significant difference to Mr. Smith's fishing enterprise. Unless prospects improve, Mr. Smith feels that he may well be forced to sell the vessel. Perhaps the Minister could tell us about the prospects for 1988 and what the size of the quota is likely to be for Scottish vessels. Perhaps he can also say how the concept of historic rights will be applied.

It would be useful if the Minister could say something about other possible opportunities, not least for fishing off Spitzbergen, because I understand that the European Commission has now produced draft proposals for an allocation of the United Kingdom quota for the Spitzbergen fishery. The Minister might be able to say how and when he expects that to be allocated. He might also say something about opportunities in the Faroese quota.

[Mr. James Wallace]

I appreciate that in the past the Minister has given this matter considerable and detailed attention. I am grateful to him for meeting me to discuss it. In the light of those discussions he was quite prepared to think again about the matter but I respectfully suggest to him, having thought about it again, that he has come to the wrong conclusion again. Some of the reasons given, not least the comparison with other vessels, show a failure to appreciate the lack of comparability, despite indications to the contrary, about the sister ship the Arctic Challenger. The wrong conclusion was reached.

In correspondence with the Minister, Mr. Smith has gone as far as to point out that his life's work as a fisherman is invested in this boat and to be forced to try to sell it would cut very deep. I hope that in response to the debate the Minister will be able to say something positive, preferably about this year's licensing. Failing that, perhaps he can say something about future licences and alternative prospects for 1987. Even if in the light of the information given today about the other vessels he wishes to reconsider again and not give an immediate response, that would certainly be preferable to an outright refusal. A wholly negative response would be a considerable disappointment to many people.

If the Vega is allowed to fish in the north Norwegian waters, it will land valuable supplies of fish at Shetland and help the community in general through support for the processing industry. It will be a great disappointment to many people and, above all, to the skipper and crew if the Minister gives a negative response because it is their livelihoods that are at stake.

2.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has put the case for his constituent, Mr. Smith, very clearly. The matter of the fishing licence for the north Norway fishery is obviously of great concern to him and, as the hon. Gentleman said, he and I have exchanged correspondence on this matter and also met to discuss it.

This debate has a little bit to do with the pressure that the hon. Gentleman has put on, but it also has a little to do with the Orkney and Shetland Movement's prospective candidate in the northern isles. I note with interest that he is to receive the backing of the Scottish National party, conditional on guarantees of his support in pressing the separatist cause. One of the policies of the Orkney and Shetland Movement is local control over fishing. Clearly the SNP must be content to support that happening in the waters around the northern isles. Such local control would mean that fishermen elsewhere in Scotland may be excluded.

I wonder if the Scottish National party in the homeland of Scottish fishing in Banff and Buchan and Moray and East Angus has explained to the fishermen in Arbroath, Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Lossiemouth that they are in bed, so to speak, with a partner who might exclude these fishermen from these important waters. I wager that the SNP has not explained that, but I am sure that my hon. Friends will ensure that their fishing constituents are aware of the likely impact on their fishing opportunities of this odd alliance between the SNP and the Orkney and Shetland Movement.

May I give a little of the background to the question of north Norwegian waters and the reasons for the current management and licensing measures in force in that area. The House knows that the European Community has fishing agreements with a number of third countries, which essentially provide for the exchange of fishing opportunities in each other's zones. Of all the fisheries agreements, the one negotiated annually with Norway is the most important from our point of view. This is because many of the important stocks of the North sea are managed jointly, and the two parties therefore agree on the annual total allowable catch for these stocks and the proportion of each stock which is due to each party.

Since the needs of the fishing fleets of the Community and Norway are different, a series of transfers between the two parties are then agreed. These exchanges cover both joint stocks and those which are managed exclusively by one party. The agreement also provides for access by each party's fishing vessels to the waters of the other party. Norway's interest lies mainly in the pelagic and industrial species in the North sea and off the west coast of Scotland, while the Community seeks additional white fish opportunities in the Norwegian sector of the North sea and in northern Norwegian waters. It is these latter opportunities which have been of particular interest to the owners of the Vega.

For some years before 1986, fishing in the north Norwegian grounds was undertaken exclusively by English-based vessels, under management arrangements made by the Humberside-based Fish Producers Organisation. When, last year, the five Aberdeen stern trawlers sought access to these waters, officials of the Fisheries Departments reached what I believe was a very fair agreement on the allocation of the United Kingdom's cod quota between the Scottish and English vessels. In effect, the FPO vessels were allowed a 75 per cent. share of the cod quota, while the remaining 25 per cent. share was allocated to the Aberdeen vessels. The actual figures were 5,520 metric tonnes and 1,840 tonnes respectively. I should perhaps explain that, although there are other stocks available to the United Kingdom in these northern Norwegian waters, these species are taken primarily as by-catches in the cod fishery. It is the cod stock which makes the long haul to these grounds viable for individual vessels.

The interest shown by the Aberdeen vessels was unexpected and, bearing in mind the fact that the Humberside FPO had a fisheries management plan geared to ensure that their vessels fully utilised the United Kingdom's north Norway cod quota in 1986, some form of management and licensing control was clearly necessary. Fishing in the area was taking place, however, before final agreement on the division of the cod quota was reached and, in the event, the Aberdeen vessels had almost taken the entire 25 per cent. Scottish share when the allocations were announced. There was no opportunity, therefore, to accommodate additional requests for licenses for the north Norway fishery which were received during 1986.

The agreement reached by my officials and those from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was considered to be an ad hoc one. As is often the case with the fishing industry an individual fish stock can move rapidly from a position where our quotas are under-utilised to one where the quotas may be fully taken during the year. This reflects the entrepreneurial spirit of the fishing industry. In any event, the officials of both

Departments made it clear to relevant industry organisations that the licensing arrangements for all the distant water fisheries would be reviewed for 1987.

An important factor in these considerations was, of course, the actual level of opportunities available to the United Kingdom fleet for 1987. In the case of the north Norwegian fishery, the principal point of interest was an increase in the cod quota from 7,360 to 9,370 tonnes. What was never in dispute was the need for continued licensing and management controls. The improvement in catch rates in the north Norway fishery in 1986; the regrettable decline in catching opportunities in 1987 for some of the main North sea white fish stocks, particularly cod and haddock; and the need to allocate fishing opportunities so that the fishery was economically viable for the participating vessels—all militated against a free-for-all fishery.

The fear that increased effort in the north Norwegian cod fishery would lead to the United Kingdom quota being taken early in the year meant that agreement on a distribution of the quota and on the appropriate management arrangements was essential; and this agreement has clearly stimulated a major debate about the respective merits of the various claims for renewed access or new access to the fishery. There can be no doubt that the north Norway fishery has in recent years been fished almost exclusively by English-based vessels. Conversely, it is also a fact that until last year the quotas available to United Kingdom vessels in north Norway waters had been under-utilised and the Aberdeen-based vessels had every right to look to these waters for additional catching opportunities, as they did last year. In all the circumstances, it was finally agreed that the United Kingdom cod quota for 1987 should be split on the basis of 7,270 tonnes for FPO vessels and 2,100 tonnes for Scottish-based vessels. Again, I believe that this was a fair and equitable split of the cod quota.

That brings me to the management and licensing arrangements in force for this year in Scotland. As hon. Members will have noted from the figures I have given, the Scottish share of the cod quota was increased from 1,840 tonnes to 2,100 tonnes. When I came to consider the most appropriate way to manage the Scottish allocation, there were pertinent factors to take into account. They included the fact that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland had received at the time more than 30 applications from vessel owners interested in fishing in north Norway; the share of the cod quota available to Scottish vessels; and, not least, the fact that the Aberdeen-based vessels had taken the initiative in seeking authority to fish in north Norway last year and had invested in appropriate fishing gear to enable them to do so. In all the circumstances, I concluded that there was insufficient scope to increase the number of vessels participating in the fishery.

Responsibility for the management measure relevant to the English industry rests with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I understand, however, that he has deemed it appropriate to continue with the arrangements which have been in force for the past few years—the delegation of management of the English quota to the Fish Producers Organisation.

Much of the argument which is based on the fact the Vega came from England—if she had stayed there, as her sister ship did, she might have got part of the English quota—is irrelevant. The way in which we operate the system is to divide the total United Kingdom quota into an English quota and a Scottish quota. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State deals with his quota in his way and I deal with mine in my way. We have a well-tried system to look after our fisheries. He looks after his and I look after mine, which is sensible.

Everyone will understand that my right hon. Friend wishes to increase the opportunities for Humberside, which is why the Fish Producers Organisation was given the quota. He is not alone in that. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to a speech made on Humberside by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), which is reported in *Fishing News* on 27 March. He said:

"Nowhere is the need for stability more keenly needed than here in Humberside. The catching sector has taken cruel punishment for international changes that were beyond its control."

He said that the Humber was the right place to exploit recovering North sea stock.

The hon. Gentleman suggests that we should not split the stocks between Scotland and England, giving roughly three quarters to Humberside boats and roughly one quarter to Scottish boats, based on the historic interests of our fishermen. Some may say that all the fisheries should come under the control of one United Kingdom Department and that there should be no sharing out, first between Scotland and England and then among the individual fisheries in those countries. I do not know how many friends such a proposal would attract in the Scottish fishing industry, but the alliance is proposing exactly that, if it ever establishes a Scottish Assembly.

The Second report of the SDP-Liberal alliance joint commission on constitutional reform says that the post of Secretary of State for Scotland will disappear,

"since all of the functions of Government which can be sensibly administered separately for Scotland will come under the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament."

It says that the increasing impact of European Community rules will militate against fragmenting consideration of industrial and economic problems, and continues:

"This applies with even greater force to agriculture and fisheries and it rules out the complete devolution of these functions to a Scottish Parliament."

The office of Secretary of State would, of course, be abolished and I should not have the privilege of addressing you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My Department would disappear and be taken into an enlarged MAFF. I do not know whether the Scottish agriculture and fishery industries have had that explained to them. I suspect that they have not. Indeed, I saw a recent publication from the alliance telling Scottish farmers that Scottish agriculture would be dealt with in Edinburgh. Clearly, the candidate in question was ignorant of the alliance parties' report.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacKay: I have only two minutes left and I have a number of points to deal with, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wallace: It would have been better if the Minister had come to those points earlier, rather than trying to make political capital. The document said that these matters would not be "completely devolved". That leaves considerable room for the devolution of agriculture and fisheries matters, and, in the case of fisheries, for regional management.

Mr. MacKay: We know now: the alliance parties change things as they go along, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said last night in the agriculture debate.

I did not have enough fish in hand to divide them six ways instead of five. If I had divided them six ways by including the Vega and therefore excluded all other applicants, the fish received by the Aberdeen vessels would have been less than would have been received last year, and that would have been unfair.

The Council of Fisheries Ministers has agreed on a Community quota for the Svalbard cod stock and Ministers are now considering how to divide that up. I reaffirm the decision that I gave the hon. Gentleman when we met — that there are not sufficient and compelling reasons to alter the management and licensing arrangements for this year's north Norway fishery, but the Vega will be taken into account when next year's arrangements for fishing in northern Norway are considered. What happens this year will not be set in concrete. We shall consider next year's arrangements and the Vega at the appropriate time.

On a slightly better note, a recent article in the *Shetland Times* states that the MV Vega has earned £760,000 in the seven months following its first landings at the end of July last year. Another edition of the *Shetland Times*—I am a devoted reader, as will have become clear to the hon. Gentleman — carried another article on 17 April reporting that Mr. Smith recently broke the Shetland record for a single landing of monkfish, which grossed £24,140. His total catch from the same trip was valued at £41,780. Mr. Smith's skill as a fisherman is clearly shown by those figures and I hope that the assurances that I have given that he will be considered when we consider the allocation of next year's fishing will come as an encouragement to him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 6 April 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Bail

45. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Attorney-General if he has any proposals for pre-trial bail applications to be heard in open court; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: No.

Bail Act 1976

46. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Attorney-General what representations he has received concerning the operation of the Bail Act 1976 by judges in cases where the police have been known to object to bail applications.

The Solicitor-General: None recently. However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has received a small number of letters on the subject.

Lord Rothschild

47. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Attorney-General when he now expects to reach a decision about the possible prosecution of Lord Rothschild under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

The Attorney-General: The police investigation remains incomplete and the Director of Public Prosecutions has as yet received no report.

Wright Case (Appeal)

48. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Attorney-General what information he has as to when the appeal by Her Majesty's Government in the Wright case is likely to be heard in Australia; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: It is expected the hearing will start on 6 July.

Crown Prosecution Service

49. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the progress of measures to improve the efficiency of the Crown prosecution service since his reply to the hon. and learned Member for Burton on 19 February, *Official Report*, column *766*.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service will seek constantly to achieve improvements in efficiency. Improved arrangements for management and forward planning are being introduced; staff numbers are being increased for 1987-88; and continuous programmes for recruitment training, the use of computers and other efficiency work are being carried out. Good progress is being made, but more lawyers have still to be recruited in London and some other areas.

Zeebrugge Ferry Disaster

50. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Attorney-General whether he took any steps to ensure that the local authority which launched an appeal fund following the "Herald of Free Enterprise" disaster took account of his guidelines on disaster funds when framing its appeal; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor on my behalf was in touch with the relevant local authority shortly after the accident and satisfied himself that my guidelines were being followed and offered any further guidance that the local authority might find helpful.

Family Courts

51. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Attorney-General when he anticipates announcing further progress towards family courts.

The Solicitor-General: The Government are considering the responses to a consultation paper issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department in May 1986 and the resource implications of the various proposals which have come forward. Good progress is being made, but I cannot say when consideration will be complete.

Raymond Kingsland

Mr. Soley asked the Attorney-General if papers relating to the alleged laundering of Mafia heroin profits by companies and bank accounts connected with Raymond Kingsland have been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: No.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General what discussions he has had with, and what advice was received from, the Data Protection Registrar in relation to his policy on taking out prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act in preference to under the Data Protection Act in cases involving abuse of the police national computer.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has had general policy discussions with the Data Protection Registrar, but none on the specific point raised by the hon. Member. The director considers each case on its own merits.

Master Bickford Smith

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if he is now in a position to reply to the letter dated 23 November 1986 which he received from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch concerning the inquiry by the Lord Chancellor into Master Bickford Smith and others; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I hope to be in a position to reply to him shortly.

Privatisation (Multiple Share Applications)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General (1) whether he will prosecute the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) under section 15 of the Theft Act 1968 for

obtaining property by deception by making multiple applications for British Telecom shares; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will prosecute the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) under section 16 of the Theft Act 1968 for obtaining pecuniary advantage by deception by making a multiple application for British Telecom shares; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the police are investigating certain allegations made against the hon. Member for Ynys Môn. They will report in due course to the Crown prosecution service.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Technical Assistance

58. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the role and extent of technical assistance as part of the United Kingdom overseas aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: Technical co-operation is an essential element in Britain's bilateral aid programme, providing recipient countries with training and expert advice in a wide range of disciplines which contribute to their development.

Third World Debt

59. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any further plans to assist the debt programme of the poorest developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are already considering new initiatives and the next opportunity to take these further will be later this week at the spring meeting of the IMF and the World Bank.

AIDS

60. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further measures he has initiated to increase bilateral and multilateral assistance to combat the spread of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome in developing countries, and especially in Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval, I have decided to give £3 million in the financial year 1987-88 to the World Health Organisation's special programme on AIDS. In addition, I have agreed to provide, over three years, about £1·6 million to the International Planned Parenthood Federation to help it develop its capability to combat the disease.

Food Aid

61. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase bilateral aid and assistance to countries on the United Nations list facing abnormal food shortages.

Mr. Chris Patten: I announced last week some £11·3 million of emergency assistance to Mozambique, including up to 30,000 tonnes of food aid. I shall publish details of our aid to other countries on the list in the *Official Report*.

Following is the information:

United Kingdom emergency and food aid in 1987 to countries facing abnormal food shortages

	Food aid £ million[1]	*Relief assistance* £ million[1]
Mozambique	6·7	3·9
Sudan	2·8	2·0
Bangladesh	9·3	—
Nepal	0·5	—

[1] Estimated.

Notes:

(1) This table only includes allocations (and deliveries of food aid) made in the first three months of 1987.

(2) Nepal has now been added to the FAD list of countries facing abnormal food shortages.

Africa (Insect Pests)

62. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase the role played by the Overseas Development Agency's scientific units in combating insect pests in Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. In view of the importance I attach to promoting agricultural development in Africa, I have instructed the Tropical Development and Research Institute to increase its operations in that area. Project proposals estimated at some £7 million are now being prepared to tackle crop and storage pests, on which TDRI has much valuable expertise and experience.

Nepal

63. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the level of aid given by his Department to Nepal.

Mr. Chris Patten: As I informed my hon. Friend on 18 March, our aid disbursements to Nepal in 1986 are provisionally estimated at £9·9 million.

The level of aid reflects the close and friendly relations between our two countries. Our aid is devoted to basic infrastructure, health and education, and to rural development in the hill areas of Nepal, in support of the Nepalese Government's efforts to improve the living conditions of their people.

Brazil

64. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact of Brazil's suspension of debt interest payments on development programmes in that country.

Mr. Chris Patten: Brazil has suspended payment of interest on its commercial loans. This move will have no effect on Britain's modest aid programme of technical assistance to that country. Other bilateral donors, and the international financial institutions, will be making their own assessments.

Water Aid

65. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit projects sponsored by Water Aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am looking forward to visiting the London office of Water Aid on 19 May. I hope to have an opportunity to visit some of its projects in the future.

Shatila and Bourj el Barajneh Refugee Camps

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives are being taken by the Overseas Development Administration both on a bilateral basis and through the European Community to provide food, medical supplies and other relief to the Palestinian refugee camps of Shatila and Bourj el Barajneh in Lebanon; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 27 March I announced new emergency aid for the Lebanon totalling £550,000. Of this £250,000 is being channelled through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in response to its appeal for food, medical and other relief supplies for the camps. The remaining £300,000 will be used by the International Committee of the Red Cross for its relief programme in Lebanon.

The European Community contributes annually — about £22 million in 1986—to the education and feeding programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which mainly benefit Palestinians in Lebanon. In addition, it has allocated this year 2·7 mecu—about £2 million — to various international agencies working in the area. About 20 per cent. of the Community programme is met from the British aid budget.

Pakistan

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level and nature of United Kingdom assistance to Pakistan.

Mr. Chris Patten: Our gross bilateral aid to Pakistan in 1986 is povisionally estimated at £20·7 million, compared to £16·6 million in 1985. It is concentrated in the main sectors to which the Pakistan authorities give priority: irrigation and agriculture; power; education and health; and population. I shall be discussing the progress of the programme with Prime Minister Junejo tomorrow.

We also provide substantial assistance to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan—over £40 million since the Soviet invasion. Following my visit to the camps last November, when I was able to see for myself the good use to which these funds are put, I plan to allocate £5 million more for support of the refugees this financial year.

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of closures of British Coal workshops/training establishments since 1979, giving in each case their geographical area.

Mr. David Hunt: Following are the closures of establishments since 1979:

British coal area and workshops	*Industrial training centres*
Scotland	
Lugar	Fordell
New Battle	Comrie
	Calder Head
North East	
Whitburn	Vane Tempest
	Tursdale
	Ashington
North Yorkshire	
	Monk Bretton
	Barnsley Main
	Allerton Bywater
South Yorkshire	
Elsecar	Bentley
Birdwell	Markham
Carcroft	Carcroft
	Fence
	Treeton
Central	
Blackwell	Annesley
Ansley	Swadlincote
Bretby	
Western	
Walkden	Valley
Kirkless	
South Wales	
Tredegar	Abernant
Tondu	Tondu

Power Stations (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions his Department is having with British Coal over the price and terms of supply of coal to power stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. David Hunt: My officials have had some discussions with officials from the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland about future international coal prices. The price and terms of supply of coal by British Coal to power stations in Northern Ireland are, however, commercial matters for negotiation between the corporation and Northern Ireland Electricity.

Coal Industry (Pit Closures)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of all pit closures which have occurred since 1979, giving in each case manpower levels at each pit concerned in the previous year, and giving an indication of its coalfield area.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 12 March at columns 279-280. Since then Newstead colliery in Nottinghamshire has closed. I will ask the chairman of British Coal to write to the hon. Member about manpower levels.

Coal Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will give details of all fatal accidents which have occurred in the coal industry for the year 1986-87, broken down according to coalfield areas;

(2) if he will give details of all serious accidents which have occurred in the coal industry for the full year 1986-87 broken down according to coalfield areas.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not yet available.

British Coal (Manpower)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will give details of current manpower levels in British Coal by area, giving indications of categories of employment;

(2) if he will give details of British Coal manpower levels by coalfield area for the full year 1986-87.

Mr. David Hunt: British Coal manpower by area for financial year 1986-87 is given below. A breakdown of manpower by category of employment is not available.

British coal manpower on colliery books by area for financial year 1986-87

	Number
Scottish	4,524
North East	14,444
North Yorkshire	17,758
South Yorkshire	15,402
North Derbyshire	7,414
Nottinghamshire	20,594
South Midlands inc. Kent	7,431
Western	12,139
South Wales	10,238
Total	109,944

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy when *(a)* Springfields, *(b)* Heysham A and B, *(c)* Hartlepool, *(d)* Wylfa, *(e)* Trawsfydd, *(f)* Oldbury, *(g)* Berkeley, *(h)* Hinkley Point A and B, *(i)* Winfrith, *(j)* Dungeness A and B, *(k)* Bradwell, *(l)* Sizewell and *(m)* Sellafield were connected to the national grid.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB, BNFL and the UKAEA as appropriate have advised me that the first of the turbine generators at each station were synchronised to the grid on the following dates:

	Date
Springfields	[1]
Heysham 1	July 1983
Heysham 2	[2]
Hartlepool	August 1983
Wylfa	January 1971
Trawsfyndd	January 1965
Oldbury	November 1967
Berkeley	June 1962
Hinkley Point A	February 1965
Hinkley Point B	February 1976
Winfrith	December 1967
Dungeness A	September 1965
Dungeness B	April 1983
Bradwell	July 1962
Sizewell	January 1966
Sellafield	[3]

[1] The facilities at Springfields do not provide power to the grid.
[2] The reactors at Heysham 2 are undergoing engineering tests and no power has been provided to the grid.
[3] The Sellafield site includes the Calder Hall reactors the first of which provided electricity supplies to the grid in October 1956.
Except for Winfrith, each of these stations has a number of turbines and these were synchronised to the grid at subsequent times.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Traffic Patrols

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the average national reduction in the strength of police traffic patrols since 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 31 December 1985, 8,265 police officers were deployed on specialist traffic duties in police forces in England and Wales other than the Metropolitan police. On 31 December 1986 the equivalent figure was 8,357, an increase of just over 1 per cent. Similar figures are not yet available for the Metropolitan police.

"Fresh Start"

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the implications for the probation service of the Prison Department's "Fresh Start" project.

Mr. Mellor: "Fresh Start" is a package of proposals designed to make fundamental changes in the working arrangements, organisation and pay systems for prison officers. It is too soon to say whether those proposals will have implications for the probation service but it is expected that, if there are any, they will be minor. They are, in any case, only likely to affect those probation officers working in prison service establishments. Review teams are visiting prison service establishments and will be drawing up recommendations for the operation of "Fresh Start" in each. Area chief probation officers will be given the opportunity to comment on their recommandations.

Prison Population

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population of England and Wales at the latest date available.

Mr. Mellor: On 27 March 1987 the total prison population in England and Wales, including Immigration Act detainees, was 49,071.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for the most recent date available, what was the certified normal accommodation and actual population of each of: Her Majesty's prison Bedford, Her Majesty's prison Birmingham, Her Majesty's prison Bristol, Her Majesty's prison Brixton, Her Majesty's prison Gloucester, Her Majesty's prison Leeds, Her Majesty's prison Lewes, Her Majesty's prison Lincoln, Her Majesty's prison Liverpool, Her Majesty's prison Manchester, Her Majesty's prison Nottingham, Her Majesty's prison Oxford, Her Majesty's prison Pentonville, Her Majesty's prison Reading and Her Majesty's prison Shrewsbury.

Mr. Mellor: On 27 March 1987 the certified normal accommodation of the establishments listed was as follows:

Establishment	*Certified Normal Accommodation*	*Population*
Bedford	176	305
Birmingham	573	1,168
Bristol	552	620

Establishment	Certified Normal Accommodation	Population
Brixton	725	1,079
Gloucester	193	311
Leeds	642	1,312
Lewes	361	568
Lincoln	359	688
Liverpool	821	1,307
Manchester	968	1,690
Nottingham	202	294
Oxford	130	253
Pentonville	834	1,122
Reading	178	332
Shrewsbury	169	297

Lincolnshire Police Authority

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what were the authorised establishment manpower figures for the Lincolnshire police authority for each of the years 1979 to 1987 inclusive;

(2) what were the actual establishment manpower figures for the Lincolnshire police authority for each of the years 1979 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

On 31 December	Authorised Police Establishment	Police Strength	Civilian Strength[1]	Total Police and Civilian Manpower[1]
1979	1,182	1,167	312	1,479
1980	1,182	1,182	336	1,518
1981	1,182	1,182	334	1,516
1982	1,182	1,183	332	1,515
1983	1,183	1,178	335	1,513
1984	1,183	1,152	333	1,485
1985	1,183	1,141	369	1,510
1986	1,183	1,157	318	1,475
On 28 February 1987	1,183	1,172	313	1,485

Note

[1] Excluding traffic wardens and cadets.
Including part-time civilian staff on a 2 for 1 basis.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Departmemt (1) how many live animals were used by Oxford university for experimental purposes under licences issued by his Department in 1985;

(2) how many animals were used by the department of physiology at Oxford for experimental purposes under licences issued by his Department in 1985;

(3) how many and which breeds of primates have been used in licensed experiments at Oxford university since 1985;

(4) how many dogs were used in licensed experiments at Oxford university in 1985;

(5) how many cats were used in licensed experiments at Oxford university in 1985;

(6) how many animals were used in licensed experiments by the department of psychology in Oxford university in 1985;

(7) how many primates have been used, in licensed experiments, by the department of psychology at Oxford university in 1985;

(8) how many primates were used by Messrs. Heddon, Sloper, Hiorns and Powell of the department of human anatomy and bio-mathematics at Oxford university in licensed experiments during 1985;

(9) in what year Messrs. Heddon and Powell were first licensed to undertake animal experiments at Oxford university;

(10) how many cats Messrs. Heddon and Powell of the department of human anatomy have used in licensed experiments since 1976;

(11) how many primates have been used by the department of psychology of Oxford university in licensed experiments since 1976;

(12) how many animals have been used by Professor Weiskrantz, professor of experimental psychology at Oxford university, in licensed experiments, since 1977;

(13) how many animals have been used by Professor Alan Connery in licensed experiments in the Oxford experimental psychology department since 1977;

(14) how many animals have been used by R. Passingham in licensed experiments in the department of experimental psychology since 1977;

(15) how many animals have been used in experiments by David J. Price of the department of physiology at Oxford university, under licence from the Home Department, since 1976;

(16) how many primates have been used in animal experiments under licence by his Department by Professor Colin Blakemore since 1976.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our practice to disclose the identity of establishments or departments where licensed experimentation is conducted, or to give details of such experimentation by reference to individuals, departments or establishments.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people at Oxford university currently hold licences to carry out animal experiments under certificate A.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our practice to disclose information of this nature. The Certificate A was a feature of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, which was repealed on 1 January this year.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many visits were paid by his Department's inspectors to the department of physiology at Oxford university between 1980 and 1987;

(2) how many visits were paid by his Department's inspectors to the departments of anatomy, psychology, the Nuffield department of anaesthetics, Nuffield orthopaedic centre, physiology and John Radcliffe hospital in 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our practice to disclose information of this nature. However, all establishments where licensed experimentation is carried out are visited frequently by inspectors, usually unannounced.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider suspending Professor Blakemore's current licence to carry out animal experiments until the work is examined fully by the Animal Procedures Committee.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. We are satisfied that Professor Blakemore's work should be allowed to continue.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Professor Colin Blakemore will be required to apply for a project licence for his work on primates and cats.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Project licence applications from persons working in universities and similar institutions are likely to be invited from October 1987 onwards.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been received for project licences, under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, since it came into force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Five hundred and sixty.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many licence applications have been rejected since the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 came into force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our practice to disclose this information.

Video Recordings

Mrs. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following the statement made in the House on 31 March by the Minister of State about video recordings, *Official Report*, column 965, he will make a statement on his examination of the future use of video recordings in the legal system.

Mr. Mellor: As I said at column 967, my right hon. Friend proposes to make an announcement soon.

Mr. Chan Hok Cheung

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will defer the deportation of Mr. Chan Hok Cheung from Belfast to Hong Kong so that he is available to give further assistance to Royal Ulster Constabulary officers making inquiries into serious allegations against a senior Royal Ulster Constabulary officer and so that Mr. Chan Hok Cheung is subject to normal procedures whereby a person is permitted to remain in the United Kingdom pending an application for judicial review of his/her case.

Mr. Waddington: Following Mr. Chan's successful application to the court on 2 April for leave to move for judicial review of the decision to remove him as an illegal entrant, removal directions have been suspended pending the outcome of the proceedings.

Nurses (Visas)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visas have been granted in the past 12 months to nurses intending to work in Newham; and how many are currently outstanding.

Mr. Waddington: Information on students applying for entry clearance who wish to train as nurses is not separately available. Qualified nurses need a work permit from the Department of Employment, and I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General is replying to the hon. Gentleman's question about them.

Deportation

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many deportation orders have been served on Iranians requiring that they be sent back to Iran in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and in how many of these cases the deportees have been deported to Iran.

Mr. Waddington: Deportation orders do not specify the country to which the person deported is to be sent. The information available relates to orders made and orders enforced and to the nationality which will normally be the country of destination. The following table gives the numbers in each of the last three years.

Deportation order made and orders enforced against Iranian nationals, 1984-86

Year	*Orders made*	*Orders enforced*[1]
1984	123	11
1985	56	10
1986	22	11

[1] Orders enforced in a particular year were not necessarily made in the same year.

Mr. Alton: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances and for what reasons his Department would consult a High Court judge over an order that a judge had made on an application for care and control made by a man whom his Department was attempting to deport; and whether, in those circumstances, the man or his legal representatives would be given an opportunity to make representations.

Mr. Waddington: I am aware of the particular case to which the hon. Member refers and will write to him.

Salvador Mendoza and Renaldo Blanco

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Salvador Mendoza and Renaldo Blanco, members of the El Salvador Human Rights Commission, were stopped and searched by immigration officials when they arrived from Ostend on 29 March.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not readily available and I will reply as soon as possible.

Firearms

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase in the numbers of crimes and offences involving the use of firearms in the 10-year period ended 1965, and what were the total of convictions in courts for firearms offences of crimes and offences involving the use of firearms in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1986 respectively.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *229*]: The number of offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used is published annually in table 3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Comparable figures are not available before 1969.

It is not possible from central records of the results of court proceedings to identify all offences in which firearms were involved. The information available on findings of guilt for offences under the Firearms Act 1968 is shown in the table below: it relates only to cases in which this was the principal offence and excludes persons also found guilty of a more serious offence. Information on a similar basis is not available for earlier years.

Persons found guilty of offences under the Firearms Act 1968 England and Wales 1980, 1985

Offence	*1980*	*1985*
Possession of firearm with intent to endanger life; use of firearms in resisting arrest	65	42
Possession of a firearm at time of committing or with intent to commit an offence	104	101
Possession of firearm without a certificate; trading in firearms without being registered; conversion of firearms; carrying loaded firearm in a public place etc.	1,039	875
Non-possession of a certificate[1] for a shotgun; trespassing with firearm on land; persons under 17 purchasing a firearm etc.	5,490	2,465
	6,698	3,483

[1] Summary offences.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

GATT (Agriculture)

66. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to be present at the GATT discussions relating to world agricultural problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Negotiation of international trade agreements is the responsibility of the European Community as a whole, represented by the Commission. My Department co-ordinates the United Kingdom input to that process. It will play a full part in preparing the Community position for the new round of GATT negotiations. These negotiations were launched in Uruguay in September 1986 at a meeting which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I both attended. The negotiations are to last four years. Among their most important tasks they will deal with the problems of international trade in agriculture, including the effects of all forms of direct and indirect subsidies. The negotiations are at an early stage, and no meetings in GATT at ministerial level are currently planned.

A copy of the Uruguay declaration launching the new round of GATT negotiations has been placed in the Library of the House.

AAH Holdings plc

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the proposed merger by AAH Holdings plc of the jointly-owned company with British Coal, namely, British Fuels Ltd. and Redland's Cawoods companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 13 March that he had decided not to refer the setting up of a joint venture company — British Fuels Ltd — by Redland plc, AAH Holdings plc and British Coal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. His decision was in accordance with the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish details of investments by manufacturing industry by regions (i) at constant prices and (ii) for each year in constant prices as a percentage of 1979 prices, for each year for 1979 using the latest estimates where appropriate.

Mr. Butcher: The requested information is show in the tables:

Net Capital Expenditure[1] in manufacturing industry[2] by standard region of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1985 at 1979 prices

£ million

Region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
North	613	428	284	256	279	356	403
Yorkshire and Humberside	625	484	360	330	354	413	435
East Midlands	478	394	316	322	323	380	435
East Anglia	210	173	133	161	161	174	193
South East	1,581	1,357	1,077	1,040	1,154	1,373	1,426
South West	377	319	272	268	308	369	384
West Midlands	705	612	423	421	425	574	571
North West	971	864	609	566	594	666	700

Region	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Wales	471	330	295	252	251	321	360
Scotland	589	568	491	404	348	425	554
Northern Ireland	127	125	106	92	104	126	129
United Kingdom	6,750	5,655	4,367	4,112	4,299	5,176	5,590

Net Capital Expenditure[1] in manufacturing industry[2] for each standard region of the United Kingdom as a percentage of net capital expenditure in the same region in 1979

Percentage

Region	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North	100	70	46	42	45	58	66
Yorkshire and Humberside	100	77	58	53	57	66	70
East Midlands	100	82	66	67	67	79	91
East Anglia	100	82	63	77	76	83	92
South East	100	86	68	66	73	87	90
South West	100	85	72	71	82	98	102
West Midlands	100	87	60	60	60	81	81
North West	100	89	63	58	61	69	72
Wales	100	70	62	53	53	68	76
Scotland	100	96	83	69	59	72	94
Northern Ireland	100	98	84	73	82	99	102
United Kingdom	100	84	65	61	64	77	83

[1] Excluding expenditure on assets leased from the financial industries.
[2] Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification, Revised 1980.
Sources: Annual Census of Production and United Kingdom National Accounts.

Steel

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions have taken place in the European Community Council of Ministers concerning reductions in steelmaking capacity in the independent sector.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None—beyond those upon which I reported in the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 23 March 1987, at column 23.

British Medical Data Systems Ltd.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what approval has been given to British Medical Data Systems Ltd. for tendering for public sector contracts.

Mr. Butcher: The Department of Trade and Industry does not keep a list of approved suppliers of services or goods. Suppliers are chosen from firms and organisations known to have appropriate capabilities.

Rolls-Royce plc

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, further to his answer to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan on 16 February, *Official Report*, column *438*, he will now state the total cost to the Government of the RB211-22B programme of Rolls-Royce plc and the total Government receipts from that programme.

Mr. Pattie: The total cost of the RB211-22B programme to Government was £537 million. Under the arrangements applying to the programme, the Government took all receipts for the first 555 engines, totalling £334 million. Commercial exploitation levies are payable on subsequent sales of engines and sales of spares. Total receipts to date are approximately £340 million.

London Greek Radio

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many times London Greek Radio has been the subject of raids by officers of his Department since 1983; and how many other stations have been raided over the same period, and how often.

Mr. Butcher: The unlicensed broadcasting station London Greek Radio first came to the attention of my Department's Radio Investigation Service in March 1984. Since that time the RIS has taken action against the station on 80 occasions. During the same period the RIS acted 563 times against 171 other unlicensed stations.

Airbus

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals to increase the sum offered to British Aerospace for the A330-A340 Airbus Industries aircraft in view of the implications for jobs in Wolverhampton and elsewhere of the current level of finance offered.

Mr. Pattie: Discussions with British Aerospace about the question of launch aid for the Airbus A330-A340 project are continuing, and I am not able to comment at present on the proposals under discussion.

Privatisation (Multiple Share Applications)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when his Department first became aware of the multiple applications for BT shares in the names of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: On Wednesday of last week. The relevant papers have since been passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider.

South Africa

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in the light of the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 591 of 1986, Her Majesty's Government will review their decision to license the export to South Africa of the Plessey AR3D military radar system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *650*]: No.

WALES

Milk Quotas

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales from where the extra 20 million litres of milk quota allocated to Northern Ireland have come; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 31 March by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at columns *445-446*.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the numbers of those people unemployed for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* between six months and one year, *(c)* between one year and two years and *(d)* over two years, and the total number of people unemployed, for every parliamentary constituency in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of People Unemployed for every Parliamentary constituency in Wales

At January 1987

	(a) Up to six months	*(b) Over six months and up to one year*	*(c) Over one year and up to two years*	*(d) Over two years*	*Total number of people unemployed*
Alyn and Deeside	1,988	755	584	1,069	4,396
Clwyd North West	2,609	930	913	1,233	5,675
Clwyd South West	1,976	668	549	851	4,044
Delyn	2,216	791	851	1,357	5,215
Wrexham	2,231	870	630	1,244	4,975
Carmarthen	2,062	788	597	837	4,284
Ceredigion and Pembroke North	2,143	728	650	846	4,367
Llanelli	2,119	846	684	1,154	4,803
Pembroke	4,322	894	840	1,325	7,381
Blaenau Gwent	2,168	801	879	1,617	5,465
Islwyn	1,719	639	711	889	3,958
Monmouth	1,456	613	457	818	3,344
Newport East	2,025	877	818	1,380	5,100
Newport West	2,121	926	961	1,570	5,578
Torfaen	2,281	765	768	1,413	5,227
Caernarfon	2,086	563	584	952	4,185
Conwy	2,098	682	561	816	4,157
Meirionnydd Nant Conwy	1,301	373	282	360	2,316
Ynys Mon	2,037	830	863	1,278	5,008
Bridgend	1,803	699	604	832	3,938
Caerphilly	2,149	890	924	1,803	5,766
Cynon Valley	1,794	599	724	1,299	4,416
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	1,898	702	691	1,751	5,042
Ogmore	1,873	735	857	1,240	4,705
Pontypridd	1,961	734	697	1,323	4,715
Rhondda	2,073	737	788	1,592	5,190
Brecon and Radnor	1,341	464	403	518	2,726
Montgomery	1,121	377	306	386	2,190
Cardiff Central	2,517	1,140	1,016	1,709	6,382
Cardiff North	1,198	505	361	603	2,667
Cardiff South and Penarth	2,063	872	891	1,704	5,530
Cardiff West	2,161	952	936	1,887	5,930
Vale of Glamorgan	2,429	860	740	1,159	5,188
Aberavon	1,939	609	627	935	4,110
Gower	1,576	650	481	807	3,514
Neath	1,832	759	604	854	4,049
Swansea East	1,968	839	807	1,895	5,509
Swansea West	2,098	881	878	1,964	5,821

Source: NOMIS.

Further Education

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales what change there has been in the staff-student ratio in further education in Wales since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The student-staff ratio on maintained establishments of further and higher education is as follows:

	Student-staff ratio
1979-80	7·6:1
1985-86	8·8:1
Percentage change	+15·8

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what change there has been in the subjects studied by students in advanced and non-advanced further education in Wales since 1979;

(2) what change there has been in the numbers of students enrolled in part-time and full-time advanced and non-advanced further education courses in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is given in the following tables:

Number of student enrolments outside the university sector

	Advanced		*Non-advanced*	
	Part-time[1]	*Full-time*[2]	*Part-time*[1]	*Full-time*[2]
1979-80	5,644	7,498	46,017	16,190
1985-86	7,048	12,192	45,645	20,225
Percentage change %	+24·9	+62·6	−0·8	+24·9

[1] Including evening only modes of attendance.
[2] Full-time, short full-time and sandwich modes of attendance.

Number of student enrolments outside the university sector

Subject of study	*Advanced Full-time equivalent* 1979-80	1985-86	*Percentage change*
Education[1]	2,557	2,686	+5·0
Medical, Health and Welfare	410	487	+18·8
Engineering and technology	1,788	3,074	+71·9
Agriculture, forestry, veterinary studies	141	117	−17·0
Science	697	1,415	+103·0
Social, administrative and business studies	1,712	3,009	+75·8
Professional and vocational subjects	762	700	−8·1
Language, literature and area studies	61	80	+31·1
Arts other than languages	239	999	+318·0
Music, drama, art and design	651	1,460	+124·3

[1] Includes teacher training.

Number of students enrolments outside the university sector

Subject of study	*Non-advanced Full-time equivalent* 1979-80	1985-86	*Percentage change*
Education[1]	190	501	+163·7
Medical, Health and Welfare	1,013	1,118	+10·4
Engineering and technology	6,920	5,412	−21·8
Agriculture, forestry, veterinary studies	868	968	+11·5
Science	373	757	+102·9
Social, administrative and business studies	3,071	4,726	+53·9
Professional and vocational subjects	2,723	3,585	+31·7
Language, literature and area studies	23	51	+121·7
Music, drama, art and design	912	970	+6·4
Other	8,707	10,408	+19·5

[1] Includes teacher training.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of primary school children in each of the local education authority areas speak Welsh as their principal language.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The percentages of pupils, aged five and over, in maintained primary schools and whose principal language is Welsh are given in the table. The figures as at September 1985 exclude pupils who are fluent in Welsh but whose home language is not Welsh.

	Per cent.
Clwyd	4·9
Dyfed	20·6
Gwent	0·1
Gwynedd	41·4
Mid Glamorgan	0·6
Powys	5·7
South Glamorgan	1·0
West Glamorgan	2·7

Food Aid

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the operation in Wales of the European Community food aid scheme for the needy and the elderly.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In Wales, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, procurement of products and distribution to individuals was carried out under the auspices of certain recognised charitable organisations. The scheme, which ended in the United Kingdom on 31 March 1987, had to be introduced quickly and I appreciate the work done by the charities concerned in discharging this very considerable task for the benefit of the needy in Wales.

Margam Mine

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give regional aid to the Margam new mine project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Government consider that on the basis of six-day working the Margam project is sufficiently attractive to go ahead without Government grant. British Coal is aware that a coal mining project such as Margam would not be a qualifying process for the purpose of regional development grant. British Coal is also fully aware that under successive Governments regional selective assistance has not been available towards the mainstream activities of nationalised industries.

Urban Aid

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he proposes to introduce the new urban regeneration grant scheme in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am pleased to say that we have today launched the urban regeneration grant scheme in Wales. This new grant mechanism is available to help bring forward significant new developments by the private sector on large sites in inner urban areas. The mechanism will work in broadly the same way as urban development grant, although URG does not need to be submitted through a local authority. Although approved URG projects may be relatively few in number, they will be an important adjunct to those existing funding sources which already contribute to the rejuvenation of the inner urban environment in Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Publications

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's practice with regard to the balance between the provision of Government information and the presentation of party policy in official publications.

The Prime Minister: The conventions which successive Governments have applied to the use of public funds for publicity and advertising were set out in a note provided to the Widdicombe committee in April 1985. A copy of that note was placed in the Library of the House at the time.

Green Pound

Mr. Maclennan asked the Prime Minister if the remarks of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) in Exeter on 12 March, concerning Government moves for a 16 per cent. devaluation in the green pound represent the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: The Government's reaction to the Commission's proposal for a four percentage point devaluation of the green pound will be decided in the light of developments on the price fixing negotiations as a whole. We shall weigh carefully all the relevant considerations.

Land Drainage

Miss Maynard asked the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government intend to issue the revised Department of the Environment/Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Welsh Office Agricultural Department land drainage and conservation guidance notes for water authorities, internal drainage boards, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission; and whether the revised guidelines will be addressed to local authorities in respect of their land drainage responsibilities under the Land Drainage Act 1976.

The Prime Minister: We plan to issue the revised guidelines in the summer. They will apply to local authorities, which are subject to the same restrictions and liabilities as a drainage authority in carrying out their functions under the Land Drainage Act 1976. Local authorities have been informed through their representative associations.

Colonel Oliver North

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she or any Ministers had any postal, telephone, videolink or other written or verbal contact with Colonel Oliver North during *(a)* 1985 or *(b)* 1986.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply which I gave the hon. Member on Monday 30 March at column *340*.

Mr. William Casey (Meetings)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister what was discussed at her meetings with William Casey in London and Washington during 1986.

The Prime Minister: In the course of my official duties I meet senior members of the United States Administration from time to time to discuss matters of common concern. It is not my practice, any more than that of previous Governments, to disclose the details of any such discussions.

Ministerial Speeches

Dr. Owen asked the Prime Minister how much it cost to central funds to have copies of the Secretary of State for Social Services' speech to the 1986 Conservative party conference printed and circulated to administrators of family practitioner committees.

The Prime Minister: The cost was £35·22.

Dr. Owen asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy that civil servants should not circulate within or outside their Departments copies of speeches made by Ministers to party conferences, following the circulation to administrators of family practitioner committees of the speech by the Secretary of State for Social Services to the 1986 Conservative party conference.

The Prime Minister: It is a standing instruction that press releases of speeches made by Ministers in a party political context should be distributed to the media through the party machinery only. Any distribution of such speeches to other recipients is for decision having regard to the particular circumstances of the case. There could well be circumstances in which it was appropriate for a Department to make sure that officials concerned with a particular activity or service were informed of policy statements about that activity or service made by their Minister, even in the case of a statement made in a political context.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister what discussions she has had with Mr. Gorbachev on her recent visits to the Soviet Union on a comprehensive test ban treaty and verification procedures; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The matter was touched on only briefly. Verification procedures were not discussed in detail.

Scottish and Border Television Companies

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister for what purpose she proposes to meet producers and executives from Scottish and Border television companies.

The Prime Minister: I have invited news and current affairs executives from a number of broadcasting and newspaper interests in Scotland for a discussion about Scottish affairs as they see them.

Soviet Union (Visit)

Dr. M. S. Miller asked the Prime Minister what facilities were provided by Her Majesty's Government and the British embassy in Moscow to the British press and media party who travelled with her on her aircraft on her recent visit to the Soviet Union; what payment those journalists were expected to make; what facilities were provided to those British journalists who were excluded from the party travelling with her; what criteria were used in determining which members of the press and other media should accompany her on her aircraft; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The facilities provided for the media covering my visit to the Soviet Union were similar to those made for earlier official tours. All journalists, British and foreign, had equal access to briefing, telephone and telex facilities which were laid on by the Soviet authorities at the instigation of the British embassy in Moscow. Arrangements were similarly made for road and air travel inside the Soviet Union for all journalists who sought visas and accreditation with the Soviet Government through No. 10 Press Office. Limitations on seats restricted the number of media seats available on my plane to 24. In addition to the two still photographers selected by the Newspaper Publishers Association to provide a pool picture service to the press generally, seats were allocated to the first 22 members of the Parliamentary Lobby to apply for them. All journalists were responsible for their own transport, hotel, telephone and other communications and incidental costs.

Central Scrutiny Programme

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Prime Minister what topics were covered in the efficiency unit's central scrutiny programme in 1986-87.

The Prime Minister: A strong programme of efficiency scrutinies was carried out in association with Sir Robin Ibbs and the efficiency unit in the year ended 31 March 1987. Scrutinies in the programme were as follows:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- Meat and Livestock Commission

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
- Patterns of Attendance
- VAT Control Officers' Skills

Ministry of Defence
- Administrative Movement in British Forces Germany
- Project Management

Department of Education and Science
- Procedures under the Education Act for the Reorganisation of Schools in England

Department of Energy
- Publications

Department of the Environment
- Planning Enforcement Appeals

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Overseas Information Services Funded by the FCO

Department of Health and Social Security
- Liable Relative Procedures
- Competitive Tendering

Home Office
- Probation Inspectorate
- Supervision of Charities

Inland Revenue
- Leaflets and Booklets
- Taxation of Unemployment Benefit

Northern Ireland
- Prison Maintenance

Overseas Development Administration
- Identification, Design, Appraisal and Approval of Bi-lateral Aid Projects and Programmes

Property Services Agency
- Professional Services in the PSA
- Project Management

Scottish Office
- Sea Fisheries Protection

Department of Trade and Industry
- National Measurement System
- Dissemination of Patent Information (jointly with Office of Arts and Libraries)

Department of Transport
- Marine Survey Service
- Chief Highway Engineer's Directorate

Welsh Office
- Community Care

The scrutiny programme is a continuous one—some of the above scrutinies began late in the period and are still in progress.

In addition the efficiency unit itself conducted a wide ranging scrutiny on improving management in the Civil Service.

A number of other scrutinies were also conducted according to full scrutiny disciplines and with guidance from the efficiency unit. These were:

Metropolitan Police Force
- The Metropolitan Police Band
- Police Overtime

In addition, the programme of second round scrutinies in the National Health Service is now nearing completion.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Road Accidents (Statistics)

Mr. Millan asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many fatal accident inquiries there have been in each of the last 10 years into deaths caused by road accidents.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Figures are not available for each of the last 10 years. However, as far as can be ascertained, the figures for the years 1985 and 1986 are 27 and 13 respectively. These figures include inquiries which were mandatory under the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths Inquiry (Scotland) Act 1976.

Children (Summary Prosecution)

Mr. Wallace asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if the Lord Advocate has issued directions to procurators fiscal regarding the summary prosecution of children under 16 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Procurators fiscal have been issued with detailed directions from the Lord Advocate about the prosecution of children under 16 years of age, and these include directions about summary prosecution. They were issued most recently in 1984 but are currently under review.

Mr. Wallace asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many children under 16 years of age were prosecuted under summary procedure in 1986.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The provisional figure for the number of children under 16 years of age who were proceeded against in summary prosecutions in Scotland in 1986 is 443.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC (Developments)

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government intend to publish the White Paper on developments in the European Community July-December 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: A White Paper — Cm. No. 122 — covering the period of the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council was published on 6 April 1987 in accordance with normal Government practice. The White Paper highlights the many achievements of the Community during the United Kingdom presidency including substantial progress towards the completion of the Common Market and the removal of barriers to trade in goods and services; radical decisions on reform of the milk and beef sectors constituting the single largest measure of reform so far achieved of the CAP; a wide ranging action programme to help stimulate employment; and intensified co-operation against terrorism, drugs and illegal immigration; in external relations the maintenance and strengthening of the open trading system reflected in the launching of the new GATT round, implementaion of a new multi-fibre arrangement and the settlement of disputes with the United States; an agreement over continued access for New Zealand dairy products; progress in normalisation of Community relations with Turkey; agreement to make food aid policy more responsive to the needs of recipient countries; and, in political co-operation, common positions vis-à-vis South Africa and Syria.

Team Spirit Manoeuvres

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will have any representatives at the United States of America —South Korean Team Spirit manoeuvres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Member on 14 April 1986, at column *245*, our defence attaché at Seoul observes the team spirit exercises as part of his normal duties.

South Korea (Military Observers)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are any plans to withdraw the British military observers from South Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: There are no British military observers in Korea. Her Majesty's ambassador has a defence attaché, who is also Commander of the Commonwealth Liaison Mission to the United Nations Command and Permanent Commonwealth member of the Military Armstice Commission. In addition to his staff, the United Kingdom provides a platoon on rotation from Hong Kong for the United Nations Honour Guard.

Syria

Dr. M. S. Miller asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether King Fahd brought with him any specific proposals from President Assad aimed at renewing or improving diplomatic ties with Syria.

Mr. Renton: No.

Overseas Missions (Communications Officers)

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Hamilton of 18 March, *Official Report*, column 551, if he has any plans to reduce the number of communications officers in missions overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The staffing levels at all diplomatic service missions overseas are reviewed regularly by the diplomatic service inspectors. Decisions on the number of staff employed on communications duties are taken as part of that process taking all factors, including cost, workloads and changes in communications techniques into account.

ENVIRONMENT

Unleaded Petrol

67. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage the establishment of a reasonable network of supplies of unleaded petrol.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he will take to stimulate greater use of lead-free petrol.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department continues to promote unleaded petrol by measures designed to increase public awareness, to stimulate demand, and to ensure general availability by 1988. Unleaded petrol is already sold at over 200 stations throughout the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget has now removed the price barrier for the motorist. I expect this to stimulate both the use and the availability of unleaded petrol.

Docklands Urban Development Area

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many firms have moved out of the docklands urban development area or have closed down since 1981; and how many people were employed in these firms.

Mr. John Patten: LDDC's records, based on statutorily recorded redundancies, show that 28 firms providing 1,783 jobs closed down between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1987.

An estimated 85 docklands firms have been relocated outside their area by the LDDC, generally within reasonable travel to work distance.

Details of firms which have otherwise moved out of the area will be available after a further survey in the course of this year. This will, however, only cover the period between 1985 and 1987.

Water Safety (Cheshire)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to whether the North West water authority has sufficient equipment to monitor the radioactivity level of water supplies from Wales being used by people in Cheshire.

Mr. Waldegrave: The North West water authority has sufficient monitoring equipment to measure the gross beta activity of the water supplied by the Huntington water treatment plant to Cheshire. The authority advises me that equipment to measure gamma activity is on order.

Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate also carries out a national programme of radiochemical monitoring of drinking water sources. The Dee is one of the sources monitored.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of the houses and flats on London Docklands Development Corporation land which were sold between July and December 1986 were sold for more than £70,000;

(2) what percentage of the houses and flats on London Docklands Development Corporation land which were sold between July and December 1986 were sold for more than £40,000;

(3) whether he will take steps to ensure that the auditor's reports on the London Docklands Development Corporation of 1985-86 and for 1986-87 will be published;

(4) what is the present average value of land held by the London Docklands Development Corporation for purposes of *(a)* housing, *(b)* offices and *(c)* industry in each of (i) the enterprise zone, (ii) the Isle of Dogs outside the enterprise zone, (iii) Southwark and (iv) Newham.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 30 March 1987 at column 414.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which organisations and individuals were consulted by the London Docklands Development Corporation in drawing up its proposals for the redevelopment of the Royal docks.

Mr. John Patten: The list of consultees is a lengthy one, and I will arrange for it to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 31 March to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), he will state how the London Docklands Development Corporation arrived at the figures of 48,000 jobs arising from the redevelopment of the Royal docks; and if he will provide an analysis by occupation of the 48,000 jobs.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 31 March concerning development strategy for the Royal docks, he will state the assumptions and calculations on which he expects 48,000 jobs to be located in the Royal docks area, together with his, or other, estimates of the broad categories of employment.

Mr. John Patten: The estimate of jobs provided in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was indicative of the scale of development likely to result from LDDC's broad development strategy. It is based upon the quantity of land available, its suitability for various types and densities of development, and the interest already shown by the private sector. The range of occupations represented in this total will depend upon the nature of the specific developments which eventually take place.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 31 March to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), regarding 7,000 homes in the London Docklands Development Corporation area, how many of the homes will be *(a)* for rent and *(b)* for sale; and what estimate he has made of the average sale price.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, pursuant to his answer of 31 March concerning development strategy for the Royal docks, he will give an estimate of the breakdown of the 7,000 dwellings into (i) freehold, (ii) private rented, (iii) housing association rented, (iv) housing association, low rent, (v) public rented and (vi) other tenures;

(2) what investment in transport infrastructure other than the Beckton extension of the dockland light railway he expects to be necessary to serve the 7,000 additional dwellings and 48,000 jobs which he expects to see in the Royal docks development area;

(3) what estimate he has made, pursuant to his answer of 31 March, *Official Report*, concerning development strategy for the Royal docks, of the effects of new retail facilities now authorised in the area of the Royal docks on the existing retail centres in east London and south Essex;

(4) what consideration he has given to the implications of, and what conclusion he has reached on, the location of his planned 7,000 additional dwellings and 48,000 jobs near the flightpath of the London city airport in the Royal docks; what consultations he or the London Docklands Development Corporation has had with the Civil Aviation Authority concerning safety aspects of these proposals; and what limitation, he expects to make on the height of buildings in the redevelopment area;

(5) what consultations he has had with local authorities concerning additional health facilities in Newham consequent to his strategy to build a further 7,000 dwellings and locate 48,000 jobs in the redevelopment area of the Royal docks;

(6) if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the approximate areas of floor space he expects to be built in the Royal docks, Newham for each of *(a)* housing, *(b)* exhibition and sports, *(c)* commercial, *(d)* industrial and *(e)* retail purposes.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) indicated the type of development which would be carried out under the approved strategy. It is too early for detailed decisions.

They will be taken in the light of the actual private sector development proposals which come forward.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what bodies or persons were invited to the presentation or press conference arranged by his Department to announce his approval for, and details of, the London Docklands Development Corporation's strategy of development for the Royal docks; and what steps he took to inform elected public representatives of his decisions.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his approval of the strategy known to the House in answer to a question from his hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 31 March. A press briefing was held subsequently.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library all information, including maps and diagrams, on his proposals and those of the London Docklands Development Corporation for his approved strategy for redevelopment of the Royal docks in Newham.

Mr. John Patten: Appropriate documents are being assembled and will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions were taken by the board of the London Docklands Development Corporation at its meeting on Thursday 26 March; and what opportunity will be given by them for applications to purchase land by developers who wish to implement the strategy he has recently approved for the Royal docks redevelopment area.

Mr. John Patten: The proceedings of the board of the London Docklands Development Corporation are confidential.

No commitments for the sale of land in the Royal docks have been entered into for major sites and the LDDC can consider applications for purchase.

Inner City Lighting (Exhibition)

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to inner city lighting to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Tracey: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 29 June to 3 July.

Public Water Supplies (Nitrate Content)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 4 March, *Official Report*, column 639, if he will now make a further statement on his talks with the water authorities on reducing nitrate content in public water supplies.

Mr. Waldegrave: Progress is being made, but I am not yet in a position to make a further statement.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list by name and location in the west midlands those sites considered for the storage of low-level nuclear waste by means of shallow burial repository but not selected for geological drilling by UK NIREX Ltd.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the original 1,500 sites considered by his Department and by NIREX to be potentially suitable for shallow burial of low level waste were in Coventry and Warwickshire; and if he will list their locations.

Mr. Waldegrave: The selection of sites for geological investigation as a possible shallow burial repository for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste was a matter for UK NIREX Ltd. Neither the Government nor NIREX considers it would be appropriate to release details of all the sites considered before the four sites currently under investigation were selected.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any sites within the Sheffield, Brightside constituency and the adjoining constituencies are being considered as a possible repository for intermediate level nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is a matter for UK NIREX Ltd. It is currently considering possible options for the disposal of intermediate level wastes, including deep burial in a repository on land, tunnelling beneath the seabed from the shore, and disposal into the seabed from a sea-based rig.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if any of the 1,500 sites investigated for low-level radioactive waste or for intermediate-level waste repositories are sited within Sandwell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answers give today to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard).

"Rural Enterprise and Development"

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much it cost his Department to produce the pamphlet, "Rural Enterprise and Development"; how many copies have been printed and what were their production costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: It is not possible to identify, separately from their other work, the time spent by officials in preparing the pamphlet "Rural Enterprise and Development". Eight thousand copies were printed at an estimated total production cost of £25,853. The pamphlet was produced for sale to the public through Her Majesty's Stationery Office at a cost of £3·95 per copy.

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he has taken to ascertain if there have been any changes in the value of Thamesmead since the district valuer's valuation on 31 March 1986;

(2) what is the value placed on fixed plant, machinery and equipment, vehicles and mobile plant, stocks and stores and other corporeal moveable property held by the London residuary body for the purpose of Thamesmead.

Mr. Chope: We intend to publish an explanatory paper in due course showing how the financial terms for the transfer of Thamesmead have been arrived at.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if tenants and other residents of Thamesmead were told of the need for sales of properties at vacant possession during the consultation organised by his Department in September and October 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Residents of Thamesmead were told that tenants would retain security of tenure and the right to buy. The question of sales of vacant dwellings is a matter for management decision by Thamesmead Town Ltd.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he arrived at the sum of £2·5 million payable for Thamesmead Town Ltd. to the London residuary body; and how many vacant possession sales of property at Thamesmead it assumes.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) today.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 31 March concerning development strategy for the Royal docks, he will set out the calculations on which Her Majesty's Government based their judgment that the cost of £140 million of the Beckton extension of the docklands light railway can be funded from the sale of land currently owned by the London Dockland Development Corporation.

Mr. John Patten: The financial appraisals carried out by LDDC are subject to commercial confidentiality. They examine different options, assessing expected receipts from the sale of LDDC's land against the phased payments which would be required for the construction of the eastern extension. They demonstrate that the increased land values which should result from the proposed extension and other infrastructure works generate sufficient funds for the construction of the extension.

Royal Docks

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 31 March concerning development strategy for the Royal docks, he will state the total cost to the London Docklands Development Corporation of land acquired for development in the Royal docks strategy area and the expected future sale value of such land on completion of his announced redevelopment and the purposes to which he expects the surplus funds to be devoted, other than the estimated £140 million cost of the Beckton extension of the docklands light railway.

Mr. John Patten: By 28 February 1987 the LDDC had paid out £18·7 million for land acquired in the Royals area. Final payments for some acquisitions have yet to be made. Payments have also been made for land statutorily vested in the corporation throughout its area, but these are not specifically attributed to particular areas. The expected future sale value of land is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

To the extent that further surplus funds are available, while precise purposes have not been decided, they will include other infrastructure.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total investment out of public funds in the Royal docks redevelopment area since the creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation; for what major purposes; at what sum for each such purpose; and what further sums of public money, together with the principal items, he expects to be invested in order to achieve his recently announced planning strategy for the area.

Mr. John Patten: The total LDDC investment in the Royal docks area, including Beckton, between 1 July 1981 and 28 February 1987, excluding acquisition of land, is as follows:

	£ million
Environmental improvement	10·8
Land reclamation and relocations	3·8
Roads and utilities	21·5
Other expenditure	4·7
	40·8

LDDC's strategy for the regeneration of the Royals area is estimated to cost £446 million at 1986-87 prices, including funding on the proposed eastern extension of the docklands light railway, new roads, utilities, reclamation and environment works.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made, in addition to the 48,000 jobs he envisages in the Royal docks redevelopment area, of additional jobs indirectly attributable to the scheme; and if he will state what occupations he expects them to be.

Mr. John Patten: An estimated 14,000 jobs will be indirectly attributable to the scheme in the wider economy. It is not possible to state the likely range of occupations that they might include with any certainty.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, following his recently announced strategy for the London docklands from Brunswick wharf to the proposed east London river crossing, he will now publish the report of his inspectors following the public inquiries into the compulsory purchase orders for the Royal docks and adjacent areas and the Leamouth area, respectively.

Mr. John Patten: No. The inspector's report following the public inquiry into the London Docklands Development Corporation's east docklands compulsory purchase order will be published when the Secretary of State issues his decision on the order.

Public Expenditure (Departmental Publications)

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make available his Department's publications, "Grant Related Expenditure 1987-88" and "The Technical Handbook of Grant Related Expenditure 1987-88."

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has today placed copies of these documents in the Library of the House. Copies have also been sent to every local authority in England, and to the local authority associations.

Cow Pasture Mine

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has completed his consideration of the Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel's report on the Cow Pasture mine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have given careful consideration to the report of the Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel on Cow Pasture mine. I have also taken careful account of the views expressed by Sandwell MBC and other local authorities in the west midlands and of the representations made to me by hon. Members.

Whilst I can understand Sandwell MBC's continuing desire for an engineering solution to remove the risk of subsidence from the Cow Pasture mine, I do not think that this would be an appropriate use of Government funds because of the uncertainty as to the extent and effects of any subsidence that may arise and the doubts expressed by the panel about the technical feasibility of the solutions considered, together with the high costs involved. I therefore accept the report's conclusions that the most sensible and cost-effective approach is a programme of monitoring and repair as and when necessary. Whilst this will not prevent subsidence occurring at the Cow Pasture mine, it will provide advance warning of the possibility of damage to property and of any necessary precautions to minmise the very small risk of personal injury. The Government will continue to fund the monitoring programme.

Should subsidence occur damaged property will need to be repaired. I have given very careful consideration to how the costs of such damage might be met, particularly in view of the wider implications for other areas of limestone mines in the Black Country.

I am not persuaded that a publicly-funded damage repair scheme is justified. The insurance industry already provides protection in respect of subsidence damage under normal household building insurance contracts. It would be inappropriate for central Government to fund any such scheme. Government are already making a proper and significant contribution towards the solution of the problems arising from abandoned limestone mines in the Black Country by providing substantial resources for investigation, monitoring and remedial action where appropriate. The Government will continue to provide financial support for that work. £11·9 million has been allocated to date and a further £5·0 million earmarked for the 1987-88 financial year. A large number of mines have already been investigated in all four Black Country boroughs as well as in the Wrekin district of Shropshire. As a result of these investigations, important progress has been made. Substantial areas—some 61 hectares—have now been removed from the consideration zones for limestone mines, either because the mines have been found to be totally collapsed and therefore not liable to further subsidence or because the limits of mining have been more accurately defined than was possible on the limited information available when the zones were established. Infilling operations have already been carried out on a trial basis at the Castlefields mine, Dudley, and are about to commence at the Littleton Street mine, Walsall. Infilling of part of the Castlefields mine underlying Birmingham road and the Dudley Town football club, and of part of the Lincoln Hill mine, Ironbridge will also commence shortly. Thus engineering solutions have been adopted where appropriate and this will continue to be the case. Additionally, some £1·7 million has been spent so far by the Government on related research to evaluate surface land use in the general economic and planning context of the Black Country, to develop new techniques of monitoring the mines and the ground movements arising from them, and to develop new methods of analysis to aid decision making.

Private sector financial institutions have an essential role in ensuring that people living within the limestone consideration zones are not disadvantaged. To this end, the Government have consulted the Association of British Insurers, the Building Societies Association and the National House Building Council. Insurance companies, representing the bulk of the household insurance market, have stated that they cannot give an unconditional guarantee that insurance cover will be provided or renewed because this depends on the circumstances of individual applications. However, they have confirmed that they will not discriminate solely on the grounds that property is in a limestone area. Insurers will continue to accept household business, including limestone subsidence, in affected areas provided there is no evidence of existing damage to the property involved. This means that each risk will be considered on its merits and that subsidence cover will be available at standard terms and conditions subject to normal underwriting considerations. These assurances should provide the necessary confidence to owner-occupiers and property investors within the Cow Pasture mine area and other consideration zones in the Black Country.

Following on from this understanding with insurers, the Building Societies Association has stated, on the basis of its contacts with building societies operating in the limestone area, that it is not aware of any general bar against lending on properties in the area. Societies will consider mortgage applications on their merits in the same

way as they would for other areas. As far as new building is concerned, the NHBC has stated that, provided its normal requirements for mining areas are met, it will issue its normal 10-year warranty for major structural damage to houses erected by registered builders. These requirements would include the provision of a mining/geology report which establishes the design critieria for subsidence and the foundation details, with calculations and details of any specialist works necessary to cater for the subsidence levels predicted.

These positive assurances are an indication of the responsible attitude being taken by the private sector and will do much to bolster confidence in the property market in the limestone areas. For their part, local authorities and statutory undertakers will need to act promptly and take any action necessary to maintain roads, public services and facilities in the event of any subsidence damage arising. They will also need to carry out any necessary environmental improvements and repairs to their own housing stock.

In addition to the Government's existing commitments, there are other important Government measures which will assist in alleviating the situation in the Black Country limestone mines area generally. These are:

i. The use of HIP resources to enable local authorities to carry out any repairs necessary following subsidence damage to their own housing stock. HIP allocations for 1987-88 have already been made; in making allocations for subsequent years, the Department will take into account any additional expenditure which may arise on essential remedial work on the local authority owned housing situated over these old mines.

ii. Where owner-occupiers of houses suffer hardship because they cannot sell by reason of the risk of subsidence I will consider, in exceptional cases, granting consent to enable local authorities to acquire the property.

iii. Continuing expert advice. I have asked the Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel to examine carefully the overall strategy for dealing with the limestone problem and, in particular, to devise a programme for the completion of investigatory works and the identification of necessary remedial action in the remaining areas affected.

iv. The Black Country is one of the areas where the local authorities have been invited to put forward projects for urban development grant and the new urban regeneration grant introduced under part III of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 is also available there. These grants may be relevant where development is proposed on sites affected by limestone working.

The limestone problem is a complex one and there is no single easy solution to it. We have developed the package of measures outlined above in response to the various elements of the problem. Continuing Government action, coupled with the assurances given by the insurance industry, building societies and the NHBC, and the local authorities' commitments, should go a long way towards restoring confidence in the local property market and to relieving the concern that has arisen due to a greater appreciation of the problems which might develop in areas affected by abandoned limestone mines.

Dartmoor (Ring Road)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the current transport difficulties experienced by rescue teams on Dartmoor, he will take steps to repair the ring road on Dartmoor near Okehampton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

This road is understood to be a private road and is not the responsibility of the Department.

Trees (Mechanical Flails)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the environmental implications of the use of mechanical flails to cut down trees on railway embankments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have been asked to reply.

One, in the last year, which I have drawn to the attention of British Rail.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alton asked the Paymaster General if he will provide for each year since 1979 the numbers of people being unemployed on Merseyside, and the number of vacancies available at job centres.

Mr. Lee: The following is the available information. Unemployment on-flow statistics—which are also in the Library—are available only from October 1982.

Numbers of people becoming unemployed claimants in the Merseyside Metropolitan Area

	Number
1983	147,277
1984	138,929
1985	144,326
1986	145,855

Note:

Figures only include computerised claims. The 1983 figure relates to jobcentres closely corresponding to the Merseyside Metropolitan area.

Average numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres covering the Merseyside Metropolitan Area

	Number
1979	2,937
1980	1,834
1981	2,203
1982	1,833
1983	2,499
1984	2,741
1985	2,836
1986	3,345

Note:

Figures for 1979-81 include a small number of vacancies for the Special Temporary Employment Programme, and from 1981 to 1983 vacancies on the Community Enterprise Programme. The 1981 figure includes temporary vacancies for work on the 1981 census.

Mr. Blair asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the total effect on the numbers on the unemployment register of those working in special employment and training measures, for each month from February 1986.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Crowther asked the Paymaster General if he will state the number of those people unemployed for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* between six months and one year, *(c)*

between one year and two years and *(d)* over two years and the total number of people unemployed for every constituency in Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Lee: I am sending the hon. Member a computer printout showing the information requested, which is available in the Library. The information relates to numbers of claimants in the parliamentary constituencies of the Yorkshire and Humberside region who had been unemployed for the durations requested on 8 January 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available.

Job Splitting Scheme

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Paymaster General whether he is proposing to make any further changes to the job splitting scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The job splitting scheme will continue with improvements designed to encourage changes in working patterns and to help in reducing unemployment. From 1 April the main changes are:

to increase the grant available to employers from £840 to £1,000, payable in three installments of £500, £200, and £300;

part-time employee places to be open to anyone claiming at an unemployment benefit office;

to change the name of the scheme to jobshure, a title which more accurately reflects the principle behind the provision and the name most commonly used by the public when describing the job splitting scheme.

New booklets giving details of the changes, together with a simplified application form, will be available from the employment measures units of the Department of Employment and jobcentres shortly.

Sheltered Placement Scheme

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General what provision is made in Batley and Spen under the sheltered placement scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: On 31 March 1987, two severely disabled people were employed under the sheltered placement scheme in Batley and Spen. The scheme is now well established nationally as a means of providing employment for severely disabled people in open conditions in a wide range of jobs. I am glad that we have been able to find resources to enable the scheme to expand substantially in the financial year 1987-88.

Jobcentres

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General how jobcentres define an unemployed building worker: and whether separate records are kept in jobcentres of *(a)* labourers and *(b)* craftsmen available for work.

Mr. Lee: Jobcentres define unemployed building workers as those unemployed jobseekers who use jobcentre services to seek work in construction and allied occupations. Individual records of unemployed building workers are held at the discretion of the local jobcentre manager in those areas where known labour skill shortages exist or where the unemployed job seeker has indicated that he is willing to move. Very many unemployed building workers who are actively seeking jobs both through jobcentres and in other ways are not registered. It would be unlikely that jobcentres would keep a register of unemployed and unskilled labourers as these jobs are generally filled very quickly by the jobcentre self-service section.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General how many building trade craftsmen are at present registered with jobcentres; and if he will list them by geographical area and by skill or craft.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available centrally. It could be obtained only by asking all jobcentres to identify and count the number of registrations for building craftsmen from each jobcentre. This would involve disproportionate cost.

Nurses (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many work permits for nurses have been granted from applicants intending to work in Newham during each of the past five years; how many have been refused; and how many are currently outstanding.

Mr. Lee: Figures prior to 1 April 1984 are not available except at disproportionate cost. The following information relates to the period 1 April 1984-31 March 1987:

	Work permits approved	*Work permits refused*	*Applications under consideration*
1984 (1 April-31 December inclusive)	10	1	—
1985	23	—	—
1986	20	1	—
1987 (1 January-31 March inclusive)	—	1	3

Miss McInnes, Barnfinstown, Orkney

Mr. Dalyell asked the Paymaster General for what reasons the Orkney office of his Department refused to grant Miss McInnes of Barnfinstown, Orkney, her request in February 1987 for information about job vacancies in Orkney; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Staff at Kirkwell jobcentre have no recollection of any request from Miss McInnes for information about vacancies in Orkney. I have asked the jobcentre manager, Marion McLeod, to get in touch with Miss McInnes to discuss her requirements.

Availability for Work Test

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General how many people have been interviewed under the new availability for work procedures; how many have had their claims for benefit stopped; how many appeals have been made; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many people have been refused full or partial unemployment benefit as a result of information obtained by the new availability for work test in Leicester and the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General (1) what recent representations he has received concerning the future of the Construction Industry Training Board's involvement in the youth training scheme;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter which he has recently received from Mr. Derek Gaulter of the Construction Industry Training Board on the subject of the Construction Industry Training Board's involvement in the YTS; and if he will also arrange for his reply to that letter to be published;

(3) how many trainees have so far been affected in each year by the involvement of the Construction Industry Training Board in the YTS;

(4) how many trainees the Construction Industry Training Board has proposed to involve in future years on its YTS;

(5) if he will make a statement on the record of the Construction Industry Training Board's past involvement in the YTS;

(6) if he will make a statement on the placement record of youngsters who have taken part in the Construction Industry Training Board's YTS;

(7) how many individual construction companies have so far been involved in the Construction Industry Training Board's YTS;

(8) if he will give a regional breakdown for each of the years for which the scheme has existed of the number of youngsters taking part in the Construction Industry Training Board's YTS.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Open College

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the Open college.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I announced plans for the Open college on 18 July last year. Much progress has been made since then. The college has been set up as a company limited by guarantee and will shortly be registered as a charity. Mr. Michael Green, chairman of Carlton Communications plc, was named as chairman of the college, Sheila Innes, controller of BBC educational broadcasting, has been appointed as chief executive and other senior staff are now in post. Detailed consultations have been undertaken with representatives of all the main interested parties to advise the college on the course and student services it should develop.

Preliminary market research has confirmed the general enthusiasm for the concept of the Open college and the outline of courses for the college's opening prospectus; more detailed research is now under way to help the college determine its future plans. The college has begun to commission course material and will have available from this September a spread of courses aimed at improving working skills, using high quality broadcast and written materials to catch the attention of industry, of the general public and of potential sponsors. An agreement has been reached with Channel 4 for the commencement of Open college programmes from 21 September with, initially, one hour's programme each weekday for 30 weeks in the year up to August 1987. Discussions are under way with other broadcasters and the college hopes shortly to be able to announce programme plans on other channels.

Extensive discussions are also under way with potential providers of services for Open college students, including further education colleges, private training organisations, companies and industry bodies and voluntary organisations in order that the college should have an effective and well motivated support network in place to give students and employers the local back-up which they need.

One of our primary objectives has been to make the college self-supporting as soon as possible by generating sufficient income from sponsorship, sale of course materials and student fees to cover its expenditure. Given the development costs of open learning materials, this will involve an initial investment from Government. Detailed objectives for the college have now been agreed and I have asked the Manpower Services Commission to review progress against them. Accordingly, I have agreed to make up to £15 million available from within existing resources over three years to enable the college to prove its attractiveness to commercial sponsors and students and to become self-financing with that period.

The objectives set for the college are demanding, but I am confident that with the support of industry and commerce and with the initial funding the Government are making available that they can be met and that the college can play a lasting and vital role in contributing to the training and upgrading of skills in the workplace.

Work Force

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if any Manpower Services Commission officials are studying the United States experience of work force; and if any have paid visits to the United States.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *241*]: Manpower Services Commission officials monitor labour market issues and developments in many other countries as a matter of course. In the past six months four MSC officials have paid visits to the United States on personal employment fellowships.

TRANSPORT

London Roads

3. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to improve the maintenance of London roads for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The national code of practice for routine maintenance on trunk roads has recently been amended to take into account the special needs in London. The major maintenance programme is also being kept under reivew to ensure a proper level of maintenance for trunk roads in London.

Rail Freight (Scotland)

8. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of his Department towards expansion of the use of rail freight in Scotland.

Mr. Moore: The Government's objectives for BR endorse the long-standing policy that the rail freight business should act commercially in unsubsidised competition with other modes. The Channel tunnel will provide the best opportunity for many years for increasing rail freight in Scotland as elsewhere.

Air Services

11. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning present Government policy towards price fixing by airlines operating between European Community member states.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are determined to ensure that the competition rules of the treaty of Rome are applied to airline price fixing arrangements within the European Community. Good progress was made at the last Council of Ministers on proposals to make cheaper fares available.

Driving Licences

14. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to require all provisional and full driving licences to bear the photograph of the holder in order to control driving licence abuse.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As my hon. Friend is aware, this has been considered on several occasions. The lack of evidence of any major driving licence abuse means that we could not justify the effective introduction of an identity card which would involve substantial cost.

Ferry Safety

15. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with European Economic Community Transport Ministers concerning ferry safety.

Mr. Moore: At the Council of Transport Ministers held on 23 March I expressed my thanks to those involved in the rescue following the Zeebrugge disaster, and I undertook to keep the Commission and the Council informed of the results of our inquiries. I have also circulated to the Council a copy of a preliminary paper about the disaster which my Department submitted to the International Maritime Organisation.

17. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has received any approaches seeking funding to research ferry safety.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Requests for the funding of research are received from different sources, including the Department's own professional staff. In many cases, the research is applicable to all types of ships including ro/ro ferries. Requests for research funding specifically applicable to ro/ro ferries since 1980 and the current positions on the projects are: assessment of toxic concentrations in car decks—completed; assymmetrical flooding of compartments—phase 1 completed, phase 2 approved; safety assessment of ro/ro vessels — completed; Survivability of ro/ros — completed; centrifugel forces and wind forces on ro/ros—completed.

Leighton-Linslade Bypass

16. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any further information as to the likely starting date for the construction of the Leighton-Linslade bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend's decision to confirm Bedfordshire county council's orders for the bypass is the subject of an application to the High Court by an objector to the scheme. Until this is determined no work can begin.

Transport Ministers (Meeting)

18. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the meeting of the European Community Transport Ministers on 23 and 24 March.

Mr. Moore: Further useful progress was made on aviation. There is now unanimous agreement that unnecessarily restrictive fare conditions should be dropped. The Council also discussed a number of inland transport issues including road haulage liberalisation and transport infrastructure. I gave a full account of the outcome of the Council in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on 27 March.

Pedestrian Casualties (Leicester)

19. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many pedestrians were killed on roads in the city of Leicester during each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Twenty-one in 1983, 13 in 1984 and six in 1985.

National Bus Company

20. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an interim statement on the progress of National Bus Company sales.

Mr. David Mitchell: Eighteen of the National Bus Company's bus and coach operating subsidiaries have been sold to their managements and three to outside purchasers. National Holidays and eight engineering subsidiaries have also been sold to outside purchasers.

In most cases provision has been made for employees to be given the opportunity to acquire shares in the businesses. I look forward to approving further sales shortly.

26. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether any National Bus Company subsidiaries have been sold for less than the value of their assets.

Mr. David Mitchell: From the outset of the disposal programme it has been made clear that information on sale prices will remain confidential while sales are in progress. A report will be made to the House in due course on the aggregate proceeds of sale.

Infrastructure (Expenditure)

21. **Mr. Charles Wardle** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what increase in constant terms there has been in capital spending on transport infrastructure since 1982.

Mr. Moore: In constant terms, the increase in capital expenditure between 1982-83 and 1985-86, the latest year for which figures are available was 11 per cent.

Vehicle Insurance

22. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received seeking the introduction of legislation to make compulsory the display in a motor vehicle of a certificate that the vehicle has third-party insurance cover.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Such display would not give conclusive evidence of insurance and in some circumstances could be positively misleading.

M40 (Waterstock-Wendlebury)

23. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he anticipates the start of the public inquiry on the Waterstock to Wendlebury section of the M40 extension.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Draft orders for this section of the M40 were published on 3 April. If, as seems likely, a public inquiry is needed, it could take place this autumn.

Research and Development

24. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the level of research and development by the British Railways Board.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I have no current plans to raise this subject with the chairman.

Docklands Light Railway

25. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects his Department's inspector of railways to report on the safety standards of the docklands light railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: A report to the Secretary of State will be made by the railway inspectorate soon after it has completed its inspection of the railway on 22 April.

40. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects that his Inspectorate of Railways will report on the fitness for public traffic of the London docklands light railway; and if he will make a statement concerning the recent accident during trials on the Isle of Dogs.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) earlier today. The recent accident at Island Gardens stations on the Isle of Dogs has been thoroughly investigated by the companies who are building the railway under contract. The railway inspectorate has been closely involved in this investigation. The contractors will be issuing a statement after some further tests have been carried out. I have no reason to believe that the railway will not be ready to open for public use by the summer, as planned.

Dornoch Firth Rail Bridge

27. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further discussions his Department has had with British Rail concerning the Dornoch Firth rail bridge.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Channel Tunnel

28. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the Eurotunnel company to discuss the progress of the Channel tunnel project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Ministers are kept informed about Eurotunnel's progress. Most recently my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my noble friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I have all visited Eurotunnel exhibitions, and later this week I shall be opening Transmanche Link's selection and training centre in Ashford.

Freightliner

29. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further information he has received from British Rail concerning the future of Freightliner.

Mr. Moore: None.

East Anglia (Airports)

30. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what investment has been approved for regional airports in East Anglia since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Investment of some £4 million has been approved for the development of Norwich and Southend Airports in the period. Further approvals are planned to enable Norwich airport to complete its terminal.

Air Services

31. **Mr. Lilley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what prospects there are for liberalisation of air services within Europe following the European Community Council of Transport Ministers on 23-24 March.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At last week's Council of Transport Ministers real progress was made on the question of cheaper fares. The Council at last accepted our view that cheap "off-peak" fares should be available to everyone without absurdly restrictive conditions. The Council is also close to agreement on ways of introducing greater competition for business fares. The prospects of agreement, by the Commission's deadline of 30 June have thus clearly improved, although considerable work is still needed, particularly on the vital question of market access.

Speed Humps

32. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in the introduction of speed humps on appropriate roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local highway authorities may install road humps under the Highways (Road Hump) Regulations without reference to the Department. We do not keep central records of the numbers installed.

London Underground (Tickets)

33. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of London Regional Transport the possibility of selling Underground tickets other than at tube stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Travelcards and Capitalcards have for some time been on sale at selected newsagents, and travel agents, and at bus garages and British Rail Stations throughout London. This has been a welcome development for passengers. It is a matter for the Board and management of London Underground Ltd. to decide whether the range and number of retail outlets should be further extended.

Travel Agents (Commissions)

34. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from travel agents concerning the reduction in British Rail commissions.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received over 100 letters from travel agents on this matter.

Rail Freight

35. **Mr. Snape** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has discussed with Eurotunnel plc the use of section 8 grants as a method of increasing demand for international rail freight.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. I have not been asked for a meeting.

Zeebrugge Ferry Disaster

36. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report into the Zeebrugge ferry disaster.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The public inquiry into the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise will open on Monday 27 April in Church house, Westminster before the hon. Mr. Justice Sheen and is expected to last for several weeks. It is not possible for me to say when the court will report but I have no doubt that it will do so without undue delay.

Devon (Roads)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress on the building programme for the north Devon link road and when he expects stage 2A, Tiverton to South Molton, and stage 2B, South Molton to Barnstaple, to start and to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work on stage 2A of the link Road started on 30 March and work on stage 2B will start later this year. Both stages are expected to be completed in summer 1989.

Railways (Job Losses)

38. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many jobs have been cut by the British Railways Board since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The reduction in the board's staff between 31 December 1979 and 31 March 1986 is estimated at about 54,000, which is equivalent to some 22 per cent. excluding jobs in the boards former hotels, ships and hovercraft activities which have been transferred to the private sector during that period.

Railways (Electrification)

39. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the electrification of the Bradford-Leeds railway.

Mr David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Monday 23 February 1987 at columns 19-20.

Woolwich Ferry

41. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the cost during 1986 of maintaining the Woolwich ferry, the number of vehicles carried, an estimate of the number of passengers carried, and the average cost per crossings per vehicle.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures for 1986-87 are distorted by strike action early in the year. The cost of operating the Woolwich ferry in 1986-87 is estimated to be £2·1 million. Estimates of typical yearly traffic are 1·05 million vehicles and 250,000 foot passengers. Average cost per vehicle crossing is approximately £2.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he received the consultants' report on the future operation of the Woolwich ferry; what consultations he has undertaken about its recommendations; and when he plans to announce his decisions on the future level of ferry services.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consultants have still to finalise their report. The London borough of Greenwich has failed to provide the input expected from it.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimate of the number of passengers being carried on the Woolwich ferry each week; and how this compares with the numbers for each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not collected on a regular basis. Spot surveys conducted by the London boroughs of Newham and Greenwich in 1983 and 1985 identified about 300 foot passengers daily using the ferry in each direction.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what opportunity he has provided for the Woolwich ferry work force to comment on the consultants' report on its future level of operation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a matter for our agents, the London borough of Greenwich, to arrange at the appropriate time.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his written answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, column *370*, concerning consultants' proposals to change the hours of operation of the Woolwich free ferry, he will consult the London borough of Newham and representatives of users of the ferry, prior to making any decision on changed hours of operations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The London borough of Newham and road haulage interests have already been consulted. I shall take account of the needs of all users of the ferry in reaching my decisions.

British Rail

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had discussions recently with the management of British Rail on dining car procedures and services on main line trains including Pullman services.

Mr. Moore: These are management matters for the Railways Board, but I would welcome the increased involvement of the private sector in managing food production and services for train catering under the board's new catering policies. Following successful trials on London — Manchester services, these new arrangements are being extended progressively to a wider range of inter city services, starting later this year on the west coast main line for which the board recently awarded contracts worth around £4 million per year to private caterers.

Roads (Lighting)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence exists on the cost-effectiveness of the lighting of trunk roads and motorways; and if he will explain the method of cost-benefit analysis applied to assessing the cost-effectiveness of such lighting.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When new or improved lighting is proposed for a trunk road or motorway, a full cost benefit analysis is undertaken to demonstrate that it is worthwhile. The evidence for the expected benefits from the saving in accidents is derived from Transport and Road Research Laboratory studies, which support the claim of approximately 30 per cent. night-time accident savings for road lighting.

The method for the analysis is set out in the departmental advice note TA 49/86, a copy of which is in the Library.

Where lighting is replaced to a similar standard there is no likely improvement to the night accident situation —for example, where a lighting system at the end of its useful life is replaced. Then a cost effective approach is adopted to identify the least whole-life cost solution.

Roads (Edgelines)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any figures are available from highway authorities which have assessed the cost-effectiveness of edgelines for maintenance savings; and if he will consider collating centrally details published by highway authorities of all engineering improvements using road markings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department commissioned a study in 1980 on this subject but it was inconclusive. I am unaware of any such studies by other highway authorities.

I am not prepared to consider centrally collating the information on road markings; this would be a major exercise and I am doubtful about the benefits to be gained from such an initiative.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of vehicles using the roads of England and Wales, as a proportion of the 24-hour traffic count, in hours of darkness, in proportion to the number of accidents that occur during the same hours at night in two-lane roads; and if he will categorise these statistics by the type of accident.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proportion of traffic in the hours of darkness varies with the type of road and with the time of year. Here is an illustrative example:

Principal roads in non built-up areas: October: England and Wales

	Per cent.
Estimated proportion of dark hours traffic	27
Proportion of accidents occurring in darkness (1985):	
Fatal	43
Serious	32
Slight	27
All	29

Road Safety

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many local authorities, representing what percentage of the whole, have now set up road accident analysis and prevention units; if he will identify them; and what steps he is taking to encourage others to follow suit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Setting up accident analysis and prevention units is the responsibility of local highway authorities: they do not have to report to me. My understanding is that about one third of authorities have no such arrangements. I have asked the TRRL to make a survey later this summer. The Department published a new manual of advice in December 1986 and supports training courses run by RoSPA. I welcome the current encouragement of road casualty reduction measures being offered by the local authority associations.

Freightliner Terminal (Edinburgh)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate has been made of the increase in road traffic that will result from the closure of the Freightliner terminal in Edinburgh; and what proportion of any such increase would be routed south via the A7, the A68 or the A1.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is not possible to make reliable estimates of the effects of the closure of the Edinburgh terminal on individual roads. Lorry traffic in the United Kingdom is expected to increase by less than half a percent as the result of all Freightliners' decisions to rationalise their business.

Traffic Flows (Islington)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the traffic flow figure for Holloway road and Archway road in the borough of Islington for January 1987, July 1986, January 1986, July 1985 and January 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Esitmates of weekday flows are shown on map 7 of the East London assessment study report. A copy was sent to the hon. Member on 12 December.

There are no traffic counters on Holloway road or Archway road in Islington. Traffic counts for that corridor

are taken at Aylmer road and Great North road in Haringey. The available figures for those locations for the dates requested are:

Month	Aylmer Road		Great North Road	
	South	North	South	North
January 1985	15,681	—	—	—
July 1985	18,763	17,454	10,377	15,701
January 1986	15,559	15,181	9,321	10,116
July 1986	—	—	10,030	11,031

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to alleviate the traffic problems of south Wales and the west of England following the difficulties experienced through the recent closure of the Severn bridge due to bad weather and the expected hold-ups and delays due to the replacement work on the bridge hangers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The complete closure of the Severn crossing is rare—it has happened twice since the crossing was opened in 1966. Hanger replacement and other strengthening works on the crossing have been planned in such a way as to keep all traffic lanes open all day during the summer and at all peak periods throughout the year. One lane in each direction will remain open at all times, except for four occasions in the early hours of Sunday mornings in the winter, when full closure of the crossing is planned. Plenty of advance notice will be given of the actual dates. Plans have been made for diverting traffic on these occasions.

Air Service Agreements

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had about air service agreements involving British and Hong Kong airlines and the People's Republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received a number of proposals for expanding air links between the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China and also between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China. I shall be discussing these matters when I visit Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China in the weeks of 27 April and 4 May respectively.

Road Construction

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the cost-benefit analysis formula for urban and rural major road building.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The formulae used in assessing major rural trunk roads are given in the COBA 9 and the QUADRO manuals which are published by the Department of Transport. For major urban road schemes there is no single set of formulae which adequately cope with all the circumstances and complexities of urban road appraisal. A more flexible approach, in line with the SACTRA recommendations, is used in urban road appraisal.

I am placing copies of the COBA 9 and QUADRO manuals in the Library.

Light Dues

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had, or intends to have, discussions with the United Kingdom's European partners on a common light fund paid for by a levy on each merchant ship calling at a Community port; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is unlikely that common funding could be negotiated. I do not think therefore such discussions would be fruitful.

Designated Roads

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to review the designated road network and the associated procedures under which London boroughs notify his Department of traffic management proposals affecting designated roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Department of Transport circular No. 4-86 sets out the manner in which a London borough council should notify my Department of any proposals to use powers which would affect traffic or the use of parking places on a designated road. It states that the arrangements will be reviewed after a suitable period.

I intend to review the extent of the designated road network and the associated procedures later in the year when the results of a full 12 months of their operation will be available.

I shall consult local authorities and organisations concerned with the movement of traffic in London before making any changes.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many designated road proposals from London borough councils have been received which involve closure of a local road; and what were his decisions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have received 21 proposals from London borough councils for traffic management schemes involving road closures aimed at removing through traffic from residential areas. I have approved eight schemes. I look forward to receiving further information on six schemes before I can take a decision. In seven cases I objected to the proposals because, although sympathising with the aims of the scheme, I considered that they would not facilitate the movement of traffic on the designated roads concerned. In all such cases I am always willing to consider sympathetically any other proposal which would not increase congestion on the designated roads in the area.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Civil Aviation Authority about the overloading of the air traffic control system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for the safety of air traffic control in the United Kingdom. I am advised by the authority that it would not allow the system to become overloaded and unsafe. If necessary, procedures would be introduced to control the flow of traffic at peak periods to prevent overloading.

Train Timekeeping

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport what statistics he has available on passenger train timekeeping.

Mr. David Mitchell: The board now provides me with quarterly reports on punctuality for each of its passenger sectors. It will be publishing the results for 1986-87 in its annual report and accounts.

Accident Black Spots

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accident black spots have been identified in London by his Department; if he will list them by borough; and what estimate he has of the total costs of remedial work necessary to remove the need for such identification.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The London accident analysis unit, as the body responsible for processing and making available the accident data collected by the police, can provide the hon. Member with particular analysis of borough accidents he needs.

The Department works closely with the unit to make London's trunk roads as safe as possible.

We are expanding our programme of accident prevention schemes and our current studies are pinpointing locations where measures will be most effective. The kind of estimate the hon. Member seeks is not practicable.

Cars (Lighting)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance and advertising has been issued by his Department on the introduction and proper use of dim-dip lighting.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None at present. I shall keep the matter under review and issue appropriate guidance if necessary. As the system does not demand any change in people's driving habits—they can use their sidelamps, automatically enhanced by dim-dip when the engine is running, or their headlamps as they choose in dull weather, twilight or in lit streets. Headlamps remain a legal obligation at night on an unlit road or in seriously reduced visibility.

Railways (Electrification)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the electrification of the London to Cambridge railway line will be completed.

Mr. David Mitchell: The line between Bishops Stortford and Cambridge was energised in December of last year. A full electric service is due to be introduced on 11 May. A second electrified service from Kings Cross to Cambridge should be completed about a year from now.

Traffic Management

Mr. Silkin asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many environmental traffic management schemes which include or included a street closure have been submitted to his Department since April 1986; when his Department took power over designated and trunk roads from the Greater London council; and how many such schemes have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected, showing to which of the London boroughs the acceptance or rejection refers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1987, c. *429*]: I have received 21 proposals from London borough councils for traffic management schemes involving road closures aimed at removing through traffic from residential areas. I have approved eight schemes. I look forward to receiving further information on six schemes before I can take a decision. In seven cases I objected to the proposals because, although sympathising with the aims of the scheme, I considered that they would not facilitate the movement of traffic on the designated roads concerned. In all such cases I am always willing to consider sympathetically any other proposal which would not increase congestion on the designated roads in the area.

SCOTLAND

Heritage (Grants)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations which are being granted financial assistance for 1987-88 under section 23 of the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 and the amount of grant in each case.

Mr. Rifkind: Grants available under section 23 of the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 are as follows:

	£
Scottish Museums Council	440,000
Royal Society of Edinburgh	273,000
Royal Scottish Geographical Society	3,000
Cultural organisations formerly grant aided under the Further Education (Scotland) Regulations 1959	
National Youth Orchestra of Scotland	23,000
Scottish Youth Theatre	39,500
Scottish Community Drama Association	24,000
Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association	5,000
Scottish Council for Dance	4,000
An Comunn Gaidhealach	35,000
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	40,000
Comunn na Gaidhig	45,000
Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich	32,000

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the successful applicants for grant assistance in 1987-88, under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: Grants available under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 for the financial year ending 31 March 1988 are as follows:

	£
National Library of Scotland	4,132,000
National Museums of Scotland	5,017,000
National Galleries of Scotland	3,417,000
Scottish Museums Council	440,000
Royal Society of Edinburgh	273,000
Royal Scottish Geographical Society	3,000
Cultural Organisations formerly grant-aided under the Further Education (Scotland) Regulations 1959	
National Youth Orchestra of Scotland	23,000
Scottish Youth Theatre	39,500

	£
Scottish Community Drama Association	24,000
Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association	5,000
Scottish Council for Dance	4,000
An Comunn Gaidhealach	35,000
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	40,000
Comunn na Gaidhlig	45,000
Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich	32,000

"Rural Scotland"

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much it cost his Department to produce the document, "Rural Scotland"; how many copies have been printed and what were their production costs; and how many he expects to be issued to the public.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Blood Donors

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what restrictions are being placed on blood donors who have visited Africa and for what reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: In order to reduce the chance of transmitting certain tropical diseases, such as malaria, potential donors who have visited certain parts of Africa are asked not to donate blood until 12 months after their return to the United Kingdom.

In addition, as a precaution against the transmission of AIDS, potential donors are asked to not to give blood if they have visited certain parts of Africa since 1977 and in addition have had sexual relations with men or women living there.

Abortions

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers of National Health Service abortions performed in Scotland on women resident in each health board area in Scotland in 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of abortions performed in National Health Service hospitals in 1984 and 1985 on women resident in each health board area is set out in the table. The figures for the island health boards have been grouped together because of the small number of terminations performed.

Health Board	*1984*	*1985*
Argyll and Clyde	545	484
Ayrshire and Arran	638	601
Borders	135	135
Dumfries and Galloway	252	233
Fife	696	721
Forth Valley	414	439
Grampian	1,098	1,038
Greater Glasgow	1,469	1,491
Highland	406	401
Lanarkshire	663	642
Lothian	1,628	1,699
Islands[1]	81	71
Tayside	898	933
Total	8,923	8,888

[1] Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles health boards.

Forestry

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the predicted average yield class of the forestry plantations established in the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness in the last five years;

(2) what response the Forestry Commission has made to the findings regarding the internal rates of return from various forestry plantations outlined in appendix 4 of the recent report by the National Audit Office on "Forestry Commission Objectives and Achievements"; and if he will make a statement.

(3) if he will estimate the average windthrow hazard class of the land in the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness approved for afforestation in the last five years.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Motoring Offences (Deaths)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) in how many cases of disposal of charges relating to causing death by reckless driving in each of the last 10 years the sentences have been passed in the sheriff court and the High Court, respectively:

(2) in how many cases in each of the last 10 years, in which a driver has been charged with careless driving, a death was involved in the charge;

(3) how many motorists alleged to have caused death by reckless driving have been charged with that offence and how many with culpable homicide in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Children (Summary Convictions)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many summary convictions there were, and what were the modes of disposal, of children under 16 years of age in 1986.

Mr. Lang: Provisional figures are given in the table.

Children under 16 years of age with a charge proved in a summary court in Scotland, 1986

Disposal	*Number of children*
Absolute discharge	8
Probation	30
Detention of child	42
Remit to children's hearing	89
Fine	99
Ordered to find caution	1
Admonished	99
Compensation order	2
All children with a charge proved in a summary court	370

Dr. John Forbes-Proctor (Patients)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that those patients of Dr. John Forbes-Proctor of Tongue, Sutherland, who wish to register with another doctor are enabled to do so.

Mr. John MacKay: I understand that patients of Dr. Forbes-Proctor, who wished to register with another

doctor and who had not been able to do so, applied to Highland health board to be assigned to a neighbouring practice but that the board concluded that it was not possible to meet their request.

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is now in a position to make a statement on the outcome of the consultation exercise on tape recording of police interviews with suspects.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I am most grateful for the very thorough responses which were received to the consultation paper on tape recording. All but one of the organisations responded and were clearly well aware of the importance of this development. The replies revealed a general consensus on most of the key issues. This showed the value of an extended experiment in providing sound experience to inform the next stage of policy development.

Virtually all respondents supported the introduction of tape recording for CID interviews with suspects where the case was serious enough to be taken in the High Court or sheriff court (including serious cases heard in a district court before a stipendiary magistrate). The majority also shared my own longer term objective for the extention of tape recording to all police interviews. In the light of these replies, and following consultation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate, I am asking chief constables throughout Scotland to begin the necessary preliminary work on buildings, equipment and training with a view to a rolling programme of implementation beginning on 1 April 1988 and concluding two years later. This initial introduction of tape recording will apply only to CID interviews; any further extentions of tape recording will depend on the outcome of its use in CID interviews.

There was some divergence of view on whether those aged under 16 should have their interviews recorded on tape. The majority argued powerfully that such persons were particularly in need of the protection afforded to a suspect by tape recording and commented on the inequity if such protection were to be denied to an individual purely on the basis of age. I have considered this matter very carefully and have decided to accept the majority of respondents' views, that tape recording should apply to all CID interviews, regardlss of the age of the suspect. Only those cases which are serious enough to warrant prosecution in at least the summary sheriff court will be affected by this decision but it represents a significant additional safeguard for the children concerned.

My officials are already discussing with chief constables what resources are required to implement this development.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the change in real terms of the hill livestock compensatory allowance payable in the original less favoured areas and the new less favoured areas for the current year, based on the rates announced on 17 December 1986.

Mr. Jopling: The rates for the hill livestock compensatory allowances were increased for the 1986 year and held unchanged for the 1987 year. As a result the real value of the allowances in January 1987 was 4·2 per cent. above their value in January 1985; and their value in January 1986 was 8·3 per cent. above their value in January 1985.

Land Drainage

Miss Maynard asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether consideration of the responses to the consultation document on the financing and administration of land drainage, flood protection and coast protection in England and Wales has been completed; and whether he will make a statement as to the future financing and administration of land drainage.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Consideration of the responses to the Green Paper is complete, but I can make no comprehensive statement as yet. Some of the matters dealt with concern administrative and financial arrangements which cannot sensibly be recast until it is clear how flood defence and land drainage should be organised following privatisation of the water authorities.

On other matters, action was announced on 5 February 1987 to introduce new arrangements to provide the water authorities with a firmer basis for planning their flood defence work. This was achieved through the replacement of the system of grants whose rates were recalculated annually by a scheme under which each water authority —or, as appropriate, local land drainage committee— qualified for one of four grant rates depending on its resources and flood defence requirements.

The Green Paper also drew attention to the desirability of integrating the separate schemes that apply to sea defence and coast protection. There is no early prospect of being able to introduce the primary legislation that would be required for this.

The Green Paper pointed also to the need for some changes in the administration of internal drainage boards. However, I think it desirable to consult further with the interests concerned before embarking on the necessary primary legislation. It would not be sensible to undertake such consultations too far in advance of the prospect of legislation. I will, however, issue a consultation paper as soon as this seems likely to be useful.

"Farming UK"

Dr. Owen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much it cost his Department to produce the document "Farming UK"; how many copies have been printed and what were their production costs; and how many have been issued to the public.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The time spent by my officials in preparing "Farming UK" cannot be identified separately from their other work and so no estimate of overall cost is possible. Eight thousand copies of the document were printed at a production cost of £23,396. The document was produced for sale through Her Majesty's Stationery Office at £3.95 and is not being issued free to the public. I understand that because of the large number of sales outlets it would not be possible except at disproportionate cost to say exactly how many copies have so far been bought.

Food Additives

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to require caterers to declare the presence of non-dairy whitener as a milk substitute;

(2) whether he will seek to amend the law so that beverages containing tea powder and non-dairy whitener will cease to be able to be sold as tea; and what representations he has received regarding the sale of such a beverage as British Rail tea.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The labelling of food is already covered by the provisions of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984; regulations 28 and 29 relate to food sold at catering establishments. Section 6 of the Food Act 1984 makes a false or misleading description of food an offence. Enforcement is a matter for local authorities. I have had no representations about the beverages sold by British Rail.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Professor Colin Blakemore

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if Professor Colin Blakemore has received any support from the Medical Research Council since 1976.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Primary and Secondary Schools

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by local education authority the number of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools closed since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The table shows, by local education authority, the number of primary and secondary schools approved for closure by me or my predecessors or determined by local education authorities, in the period from August 1980, when the Education Act 1980 came into force, to December 1986.

School Closures
(August 1980—December 1986)

LEA	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*
Avon	16	2	18
Barking	—	—	—
Barnet	—	1	1
Barnsley	11	—	11
Bedfordshire	16	1	17
Berkshire	9	8	17
Bexley	2	3	5
Birmingham	14	20	34
Bolton	4	6	10
Bradford	8	—	8
Brent	1	—	1
Bromley	4	4	8
Buckinghamshire	15	4	19
Bury	3	3	6
Calderdale	4	1	5
Cambridgeshire	21	2	23
Cheshire	24	5	29
Cleveland	15	5	20
Cornwall	12	—	12
Coventry	8	2	10
Croydon	1	9	10
Cumbria	21	3	24
Derbyshire	16	2	18
Devon	7	8	15
Doncaster	7	—	7
Dorset	9	3	12
Dudley	8	2	10
Durham	14	3	17
Ealing	2	3	5
East Sussex	6	—	6
Enfield	1	4	5
Essex	18	1	19
Gateshead	2	1	3
Gloucestershire	14	3	17
Hampshire	39	5	44
Haringey	—	—	—
Harrow	—	2	2
Havering	—	1	1
Hereford and Worcester	25	—	25
Hertfordshire	16	10	26
Hillingdon	—	2	2
Hounslow	—	—	—
Humberside	42	4	46
ILEA	9	14	23
Isle of Wight	2	—	2
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—
Kent	11	5	16
Kingston-upon-Thames	2	1	3
Kirklees	9	1	10
Knowsley	2	14	16
Lancashire	23	6	29
Leeds	5	3	8
Leicestershire	14	2	16
Lincolnshire	50	1	51
Liverpool	5	31	36
Manchester	26	14	40
Merton	1	2	3
Newcastle upon Tyne	3	4	7
Newham	1	—	1
Norfolk	57	1	58
North Tyneside	3	1	4
North Yorkshire	25	8	33
Northamptonshire	5	—	5
Northumberland	9	2	11
Nottinghamshire	17	6	23
Oldham	7	2	9
Oxfordshire	16	6	22
Redbridge	2	2	4
Richmond-upon-Thames	2	—	2
Rochdale	2	1	3
Rotherham	1	2	3
Salford	4	3	7
Salop	17	1	18
Sandwell	2	2	4
Sefton	6	3	9
Sheffield	13	8	21
Solihull	4	4	8
Somerset	8	—	8
South Tyneside	11	3	14
Staffordshire	35	8	43
St. Helens	5	3	8
Stockport	5	2	7
Suffolk	18	—	18
Sunderland	6	5	11
Surrey	18	8	26
Sutton	—	2	2
Tameside	2	4	6
Trafford	6	—	6
Wakefield	11	1	12
Walsall	3	—	3
Waltham Forest	1	8	9
Warwickshire	11	2	13
West Sussex	1	1	2
Wigan	8	4	12
Wiltshire	13	—	13
Wirral	9	7	16
Wolverhampton	4	1	5

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing expenditure per pupil for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools for each local education authority for 1979, 1983 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is given in the following tables. Where n.a. appears in the 1985-86 column, it means that the Department has not yet received a report of the Authority's actual expenditure in that year.

Net institutional expenditure per pupil

	Primary schools		
	1979-80 £	*1983-84* £	[1]*1985-86* £
Barking	495	815	915
Barnet	475	830	930
Bexley	420	710	815
Brent	590	980	n.a.
Bromley	435	760	855
Croydon	450	745	865
Ealing	555	975	1,050
Enfield	425	705	775
Haringey	605	1,095	1,160
Harrow	465	760	875
Havering	435	740	825
Hillingdon	460	825	895
Hounslow	500	890	965
Kingston-upon-Thames	450	715	825
Merton	520	780	n.a.
Newham	560	950	n.a.
Redbridge	435	745	835
Richmond-upon-Thames	480	800	900
Sutton	410	680	750
Waltham Forest	490	875	980
ILEA	695	1,210	n.a.
Birmingham	410	665	745
Coventry	440	785	850
Dudley	360	650	735
Sandwell	435	765	875
Solihull	385	690	755
Walsall	415	785	830
Wolverhampton	465	815	920
Knowsley	415	770	845
Liverpool	470	830	n.a.
St. Helens	385	675	770
Sefton	405	685	740
Wirral	400	675	720
Bolton	380	640	720
Bury	415	645	715
Manchester	520	785	905
Oldham	405	700	815
Rochdale	415	705	795
Salford	400	725	790
Stockport	375	670	740
Tameside	405	715	815
Trafford	400	685	735
Wigan	390	690	785
Barnsley	455	795	865
Doncaster	460	785	870
Rotherham	395	700	800
Sheffield	465	880	980
Bradford	455	745	850
Calderdale	410	725	800
Kirklees	390	665	785
Leeds	480	720	795
Wakefield	420	765	875
Gateshead	460	805	900
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	520	875	930
North Tyneside	460	780	900
South Tyneside	490	815	865
Sunderland	440	700	775
Isles of Scilly	630	1,065	1,210
Avon	420	700	780
Befordshire	470	745	815
Berkshire	400	690	790
Buckinghamshire	410	665	755
Cambridgeshire	400	635	730
Cheshire	400	680	760
Cleveland	430	710	795
Cornwall	370	640	710
Cumbria	405	715	775
Derbyshire	395	690	780
Devon	390	645	725
Dorset	400	685	770
Durham	440	715	825
East Sussex	415	690	760
Essex	380	645	730
Gloucestershire	400	660	740
Hampshire	380	645	730
Hereford and Worcester	385	640	745
Hertfordshire	440	695	780
Humberside	415	775	865
Isle of Wight	415	695	730
Kent	375	620	695
Lancashire	365	635	720
Leicestershire	400	725	805
Lincolnshire	385	635	720
Norfolk	410	680	760
North Yorkshire	420	705	775
Northamptonshire	380	670	740
Northumberland	420	690	755
Nottinghamshire	385	760	840
Oxfordshire	420	730	815
Salop	370	675	765
Somerset	370	630	700
Staffordshire	430	755	815
Suffolk	420	700	770
Surrey	400	655	730
Warwickshire	385	670	765
West Sussex	375	610	705
Wiltshire	390	645	745

[1] Provisional.

Net institutional expenditure per pupil—Secondary schools

	1979-80 (£)	*1983-84* (£)	[1]*1985-86* (£)
Barking	715	1,090	1,260
Barnet	690	1,190	1,330
Bexley	630	1,030	1,195
Brent	785	1,365	n.a.
Bromley	660	1,090	1,255
Croydon	670	1,140	1,355
Ealing	720	1,220	1,460
Enfield	605	1,055	1,245
Haringey	760	1,475	1,710
Harrow	745	1,200	1,340
Havering	670	1,135	1,325
Hillindon	665	1,175	1,315
Hounslow	685	1,140	1,405
Kingston-upon-Thames	630	1,055	1,325
Merton	660	970	n.a.
Newham	730	1,340	n.a.
Redbridge	660	1,125	1,290
Richmond-upon-Thames	630	1,040	1,200
Sutton	605	1,000	1,135
Waltham Forest	785	1,305	1,540
ILEA	925	1,755	n.a.
Birmingham	615	980	1,175
Coventry	630	1,065	1,310
Dudley	545	935	1,125
Sandwell	630	1,045	1,230
Solihull	570	915	1,115
Walsall	600	1,055	1,185
Wolverhampton	635	1,070	1,225
Knowsley	640	1,140	1,320
Liverpool	675	1,105	n.a.
St Helens	605	990	1,150
Sefton	590	985	1,125

	1979-80 (£)	1983-84 (£)	[1]1985-86 (£)
Wirral	580	990	1,125
Bolton	575	965	1,115
Bury	595	1,010	1,175
Manchester	770	1,190	1,425
Oldham	575	925	1,095
Rochdale	650	1,115	1,275
Salford	630	1,025	1,200
Stockport	560	945	1,115
Tameside	580	975	1,160
Trafford	550	965	1,140
Wigan	610	1,045	1,230
Barnsley	620	990	1,165
Doncaster	630	995	1,145
Rotherham	570	925	1,070
Sheffield	635	1,115	1,260
Bradford	540	890	1,085
Calderdale	565	940	1,110
Kirklees	540	870	1,055
Leeds	490	920	1,060
Wakefield	540	915	1,090
Gateshead	600	975	1,185
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	695	1,195	1,345
North Tyneside	610	1,060	1,295
South Tyneside	650	1,050	1,255
Sunderland	615	970	1,150
Isles of Scilly	920	1,360	1,875
Avon	580	1,020	1,160
Bedfordshire	610	985	1,140
Berkshire	575	980	1,150
Buckinghamshire	625	1,010	1,140
Cambridgeshire	590	920	1,040
Cheshire	580	940	1,090
Cleveland	610	1,005	1,175
Cornwall	555	915	1,045
Cumbria	585	990	1,095
Derbyshire	565	950	1,125
Devon	545	925	1,095
Dorset	560	930	1,030
Durham	570	905	1,095
East Sussex	600	950	1,085
Essex	570	955	1,115
Gloucestershire	555	950	1,095
Hampshire	565	930	1,065
Hereford and Worcester	560	865	1,060
Hertfordshire	650	1,020	1,180
Humberside	570	975	1,125
Isle of Wight	535	895	1,030
Kent	545	895	1,015
Lancashire	575	940	1,095
Leicestershire	585	1,025	1,205
Lincolnshire	580	935	1,025
Norfolk	575	960	1,095
North Yorkshire	590	970	1,110
Northamptonshire	570	960	1,110
Northumberland	570	925	1,075
Nottinghamshire	575	1,030	1,220
Oxfordshire	590	1,010	1,190
Salop	575	965	1,125
Somerset	530	890	1,040
Staffordshire	600	970	1,125
Suffolk	525	915	1,030
Surrey	590	965	1,110
Warwickshire	570	930	1,085
West Sussex	540	900	1,060
Wiltshire	560	935	1,055

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the pupil-teacher ratios for each local education authority for 1979, 1983 and 1986 for *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The pupil-teacher ratios within maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England in 1979, 1983 and 1986 were as follows:

Pupil/Teacher Ratios[1]

	Primary Schools			Secondary Schools		
	1979	1983	1986	1979	1983	1986
Barking	22·3	21·6	21·1	18·6	15·9	15·8
Barnet	21·5	20·2	20·1	18·1	14·6	14·5
Bexley	25·1	24·3	23·3	20·6	16·8	16·5
Brent	18·7	18·4	18·5	16·0	13·5	12·0
Bromley	24·5	23·4	22·9	20·0	16·4	16·2
Croydon	23·0	22·0	22·0	19·2	15·8	15·2
Ealing	20·4	19·0	19·7	18·3	15·1	14·6
Enfield	24·0	22·4	23·0	19·9	15·8	15·3
Haringey	20·9	19·0	18·6	18·3	14·1	12·6
Harrow	22·1	20·8	21·1	18·7	14·6	14·6
Havering	23·6	22·9	22·6	19·9	15·7	15·3
Hillingdon	23·0	22·6	22·5	19·4	16·1	16·9
Hounslow	21·9	20·1	19·8	18·5	15·5	15·2
Kingston-upon-Thames	22·1	22·4	22·1	18·8	16·4	14·9
Merton	22·2	22·4	21·8	19·1	17·5	17·0
Newham	21·4	21·1	20·4	18·6	15·1	13·5
Redbridge	24·1	23·5	23·9	20·2	16·2	15·9
Richmond-upon-Thames	22·2	21·1	20·8	19·6	16·5	15·8
Sutton	24·0	24·7	24·9	20·0	17·1	16·9
Waltham Forest	22·4	21·1	20·9	18·1	14·0	13·6
Inner London	18·7	17·4	17·2	16·7	13·8	12·8
Birmingham	23·9	24·0	22·7	19·8	17·4	16·3
Coventry	22·7	22·3	22·1	19·1	16·6	15·2
Dudley	25·5	23·2	22·8	21·6	16·5	14·9
Sandwell	24·4	22·7	22·4	19·7	15·7	14·9
Solihull	23·5	23·0	22·8	19·5	16·9	16·1
Walsall	22·6	20·8	20·6	18·9	15·0	14·6
Wolverhampton	21·1	19·3	19·3	18·2	15·2	14·7
Knowsley	23·4	22·1	21·3	19·4	15·8	14·5
Liverpool	21·1	20·7	20·6	18·4	16·6	14·9

	Primary Schools			Secondary Schools		
	1979	1983	1986	1979	1983	1986
St. Helens	23·8	23·1	22·2	19·9	15·8	15·1
Sefton	23·6	22·2	23·3	20·1	16·7	16·6
Wirral	24·2	23·1	23·6	20·4	16·2	16·0
Bolton	25·2	24·0	23·8	20·6	16·2	15·6
Bury	23·5	23·0	22·3	19·8	15·8	15·2
Manchester	21·9	22·6	21·5	18·0	15·4	13·8
Oldham	25·2	23·6	22·8	21·3	17·4	16·4
Rochdale	22·9	22·4	22·2	18·6	15·0	14·6
Salford	23·5	21·5	21·6	19·3	15·7	15·0
Stockport	26·3	23·5	23·0	21·4	16·4	16·0
Tameside	24·1	23·2	23·3	20·1	16·2	15·8
Trafford	22·2	23·0	22·9	19·1	16·5	16·3
Wigan	22·6	21·3	21·1	19·0	15·3	15·0
Barnsley	23·6	21·5	21·6	20·0	16·7	15·8
Doncaster	22·2	21·3	21·5	19·3	16·3	16·5
Rotherham	24·0	22·7	21·3	20·4	17·0	16·3
Sheffield	21·8	20·7	20·0	19·1	15·9	15·1
Bradford	20·4	20·3	20·5	18·7	18·2	16·4
Calderdale	23·7	21·7	21·8	20·6	17·2	16·1
Kirklees	23·6	22·1	21·9	20·5	17·3	16·3
Leeds	24·6	23·0	21·4	20·3	16·8	16·0
Wakefield	23·3	22·9	21·4	20·3	17·8	16·3
Gateshead	21·2	19·3	19·5	18·8	16·7	15·2
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	18·7	18·2	19·1	16·4	14·3	14·5
North Tyneside	21·1	20·1	18·6	17·9	15·0	13·8
South Tyneside	20·3	19·9	20·7	18·0	15·4	14·4
Sunderland	23·5	22·3	22·0	19·8	16·3	15·6
Isles of Scilly	15·3	14·2	12·3	13·3	11·5	10·0
Avon	24·2	23·9	24·2	20·1	16·7	16·6
Bedfordshire	21·6	22·9	22·5	18·8	17·6	17·4
Berkshire	23·8	22·9	23·3	19·9	16·4	16·0
Buckinghamshire	24·2	24·1	24·4	20·8	16·4	16·2
Cambridgeshire	23·3	23·6	23·4	19·7	16·8	16·7
Cheshire	23·5	22·6	22·7	20·0	16·8	17·0
Cleveland	23·4	21·8	22·3	20·3	16·4	15·9
Cornwall	24·2	23·6	23·5	20·2	16·9	16·6
Cumbria	23·1	21·5	21·2	19·5	16·2	15·5
Derbyshire	23·7	22·3	22·3	20·4	17·2	16·2
Devon	24·3	23·3	23·6	20·9	17·0	16·6
Dorset	23·7	23·4	23·4	20·2	17·1	16·9
Durham	21·5	21·7	22·1	19·1	17·0	16·7
East Sussex	23·4	22·0	22·9	20·1	17·3	16·9
Essex	24·8	24·1	23·9	20·9	17·3	17·0
Gloucestershire	23·4	23·0	22·9	20·1	17·1	16·6
Hampshire	24·6	24·0	23·5	20·4	17·0	16·8
Hereford and Worcester	24·2	25·0	24·0	20·2	18·0	16·9
Hertfordshire	22·5	22·4	22·2	18·8	16·2	15·9
Humberside	22·1	20·9	21·3	19·0	16·3	15·9
Isle of Wight	23·9	23·0	23·9	20·3	18·1	17·6
Kent	24·3	23·9	23·9	20·6	17·3	16·8
Lancashire	24·7	23·8	23·7	20·2	16·6	16·4
Leicestershire	23·3	22·8	23·1	19·3	16·3	15·6
Lincolnshire	23·7	24·8	24·3	20·2	17·1	16·9
Norfolk	22·8	22·2	22·3	20·4	16·7	16·4
North Yorkshire	22·5	22·0	22·1	19·5	16·7	16·5
Northamptonshire	24·4	22·3	22·2	20·1	16·7	15·9
Northumberland	23·4	23·0	23·3	19·5	17·6	16·5
Nottinghamshire	24·7	21·6	20·8	20·3	16·2	15·4
Oxfordshire	24·2	24·2	23·3	20·5	17·4	17·0
Shropshire	23·8	21·9	21·8	19·9	16·3	15·8
Somerset	24·6	24·6	23·9	21·3	18·3	17·4
Staffordshire	23·2	22·0	22·8	19·8	16·4	16·5
Suffolk	23·4	22·2	22·4	20·2	17·2	17·0
Surrey	21·9	22·1	21·8	19·2	16·4	16·0
Warwickshire	23·1	22·4	22·4	20·2	17·1	16·7
West Sussex	24·3	23·3	23·3	20·9	17·2	16·7
Wiltshire	23·9	23·7	23·2	20·6	17·2	17·2

[1] Within schools. Middle schools are included with primary and secondary schools as deemed.

School Playing Fields (Sale)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by local education authority the number of schools which have sold playing fields following his Department's circular 909 (1981).

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department does not collect information about the disposal of playing fields attached to schools and other educational establishments.

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the total cost of resources available in schools but unused as a result of the teachers' strike, since the strike began.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not available. In each of the last two weeks, between 1 and 2 per cent. of schools have been affected by strike action.

Handicapped Pupils

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of ancillary staff provided in schools by local education authorities to look after the special needs of handicapped pupils for each year since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is collected only for special schools. The numbers of full-time and part-time ancillary staff employed in maintained special schools in England in each year since 1981 are as follows:

January each year	*Number of ancillary staff*
1981	8,268
1982	8,036
1983	8,308
1984	8,693
1985	9,086
1986	[1]10,577

[1] Child care staff in residential schools and non-teaching assistants

GCSE

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 26 February, *Official Report*, column 351, the discussions which are being held with GCSE examining groups, local education authorities and teachers' associations have been concluded; and if additional expenditure for future funding of the GCSE directly has been specified.

Mrs. Rumbold: The first round of discussions with the teachers' associations has now been completed. The information obtained from these, meetings with LEA officers, and monitoring exercises conducted by Her Majesty's Inspector is being analysed. There will be further discussions later in the year to update the information. At this stage it is too early to judge whether resources are needed additional to the substantial provisio for GCSE already made, as detailed in my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 31 March at columns *447* and *448*.

School Governors (Annual Report)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the refusal of certain local education authorities to pay the incidental expenses, such as paper, typing and duplication, incurred by school governors in producing and distributing the annual report to parents.

Mr. Dunn: I have received one such representation, which is currently being investigated.

Teachers (Cost)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the notional cost of a teacher on 1 September 1986; what is the current cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average cost of a teacher—salary including allowances, and employers national insurance and superannuation contributions — in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales on 1 September 1986 is estimated to be £13,240 per annum.

The Government's pay proposals would increase that figure to £14,330 from 1 January 1987, and to £15,410 from 1 October 1987.

Ealing (Schools)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will direct the Ealing education authority under section 68 of the Education Act 1944 to take steps to reopen borough schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The department has been monitoring the effects on educational provision in this area of the Ealing local education authority's dispute with NALGO. We understand that this dispute has now been settled and that the situation is returning to normal. Therefore the question of a direction does not arise.

Incentive Allowances

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will give local education authorities the relevant rules, or information from which they can draft such rules, for the allocation of incentive allowances amongst schools following the ending of the Burnham negotiations.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will be issuing a paper about the new £500 incentive allowances before Easter.

Higher Education

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the percentage of students in higher education who are living other than in the parental home in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other OECD countries.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1987, c. *527*]: Information is not available for the whole of higher education. In 1984-85, 92 per cent. of mandatory award-holders (excluding those with minimum awards for whom the information is not collected) from England and Wales studying in the United Kingdom, were living away from the parental home. The figure for Scotland for all mandatory award holders was 62 per cent. Comparable information is not available for OECD countries.

THE ARTS

National Maritime Museum

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts (1) why the office of the director of the National Maritime museum was redecorated twice in the last two years; and what was the cost of each redecoration;

(2) how many National Maritime museum posts, in which appointments and in which specialities, have been disbanded in the last two years;

(3) how many National Maritime museum posts, in which appointments and in which specialities, are to be disbanded in the present year;

(4) which National Maritime museum appointments, and in which specialities, navigation, charts, ship plans, are being abandoned and which amalgamated; and whether he will take steps to ensure that any such amalgamations do not damage the specialist work in the respective areas.

Mr. Luce: I am in touch with the director of the National Maritime museum and will write to hon. Member shortly.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor ot the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of raising the tax threshold to *(a)* supplementary benefit levels, *(b)* supplementary benefit levels, including housing costs and *(c)* family income supplement levels.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Broad estimates of the direct revenue effect—in a full year at 1987-88 levels of income—of changing tax thresholds are as follows:

	Yield/Cost
(a) to supplementary benefit ordinary scale rates plus appropriate child additions	Yield £6 billion
(b) to supplementary benefit ordinary scale rates plus appropriate child additions and average housing costs	Cost £2¼ billion
(c) to family income supplement prescribed amounts for families with children and to levels increased by the same proportion for families without children	Cost £6¼ billion

Detailed costs of the changes relating to supplementary benefit could be made only at disproportionate cost because entitlement to supplementary benefit depends upon a range of factors related to individual family circumstances. In the above costings, income tax reliefs other than personal allowances have been assumed to remain unchanged.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his forecast for 1987-88 of the amount of income tax payable by range of income on the same basis as that shown in table 5.11 of the latest edition of "Social Trends"; and if he will add a table for all indirect taxes, including rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimates are given in the table below. They are based on a projection of the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional. I regret that it is not possible to provide reliable estimates by income range in respect of indirect taxes or rates.

Taxpayers and income tax payable by range of total income[1], 1987-88

Total income[1] Lower limit	*At basic rate*		*At rates in excess over basic rate*			
	Number of tax units[2,3]	*Amount of tax[4]*	*Number of tax units[2]*	*Amount of tax*	*Average rate of tax on all incomes*	*Average tax on all incomes*
£ pa	*millions*	*£ billion*	*millions*	*£ billion*	*per cent.*	*£ thousand*
2,425	3·2	0·9	0	0	7·5	280
5,000	3·2	2·4	0	0	12·5	740
7,000	4·4	5·2	0	0	14·0	1,200
10,000	5·3	9·7	0	0	15·0	1,850
15,000	2·7	7·5	0	0	16·5	2,800
20,000	1·6	7·3	0·6	0·2	19·5	4,650
30,000	0·8	7·6	0·6	2·9	31·0	14,150
All ranges	21·2	40·6	1·2	3·1	17·5	2,080

[1] Total income for income tax purposes.
[2] Counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.
[3] Including taxpayers who also pay at higher rates.
[4] Includes tax at composite rate.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 28 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns 326-8.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *216*]: The information is given in the table.

Gains from the Budget proposals for income tax allowances, rates, and thresholds compared with indexation by range of income

[1]Range of gross income	[2]Tax units as percentage of total liable to tax	Reduction in income tax liability in 1987-88 from Budget proposals compared with indexation	
		Amount	As percentage of total
£ per year	Per cent.	£ million	Per cent.
Under 5,000	15	60	3
5,000 to 7,500	19	220	9
7,500 to 10,000	17	310	12
10,000 to 12,500	14	360	14
12,500 to 15,000	11	330	13
15,000 to 20,000	13	530	21
20,000 to 30,000	7	490	19
30,000 to 50,000	3	200	8
Above 50,000	1	30	1
All	100	2,530	100

[1] Income for income tax purposes.
[2] That is counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost in lost tax revenue of an individual male and an individual female unemployed person in each of the past five years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to estimate the cost in lost tax revenue.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table for each year since 1971 showing the tax-free income for each of a one-, two-, three- and four-child family, including chidren aged between 11 years and 16 years and over 16 years, family income and supplementary beneft entitlement levels, including average housing costs.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The tables show break-even points measured as a percentage of family income supplement prescribed amounts and supplementary benefits ordinary scale rates — plus average housing costs. Break-even points are the levels of taxable income at which a net liability to tax arises after deducting receipt of child benefit from payment of income tax.

Weekly break-even points as a percentage of FIS prescribed amounts in April of each year[5]

	1 earner couple			
	with one child[1]	with two children[2]	with three children[3]	with four children[4]
1971-72	85·1	101·1	117·9	134·5
1972-73	93·4	107·0	122·0	137·1
1973-74	89·3	100·2	112·5	124·6
1974-75	98·8	111·2	124·6	137·6
1975-76	91·9	104·9	117·6	129·8
1976-77	84·6	97·7	110·2	122·0
1977-78	89·0	99·7	110·3	120·5
1978-79	95·2	109·7	121·3	132·2
1979-80	110·1	128·0	143·2	156·2
1980-81	99·1	115·2	129·2	141·3
1981-82	86·1	100·2	111·8	121·6
1982-83	88·2	101·8	113·0	122·4
1983-84	89·7	103·1	114·1	123·2
1984-85	96·8	110·4	121·5	130·7
1985-86	99·4	112·5	123·2	132·1
1986-87	97·1	109·2	118·0	124·3
1987-88	99·1	112·5	122·3	129·3

[1] Aged under 11.
[2] Two children aged under 11.
[3] Two children aged under, one aged 11-15.
[4] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11-15, one aged 16.
[5] For 1971-72, the FIS prescribed amounts relate to the introductory levels of FIS in August 1971.

Weekly break-even points as a percentage of supplementary benefit ordinary scale rates (plus average housing costs) in April of each year.

	1 earner couple			
	With one child[1]	With two children[2]	With three children[3]	With four children[4]
1971-72	120·3	139·0	155·0	163·2
1972-73	133·5	147·2	158·7	161·7
1973-74	122·1	133·7	143·7	145·5
1974-75	119·9	132·3	142·5	144·7
1975-76	95·9	107·8	116·5	118·6
1976-77	97·5	110·0	118·9	120·9
1977-78	110·4	118·5	123·4	122·0
1978-79	118·7	130·8	136·0	133·9
1979-80	132·9	147·5	154·8	152·4
1980-81	120·7	133·4	140·1	138·0
1981-82	102·0	116·1	121·2	121·8
1982-83	105·2	119·3	124·3	124·7
1983-84	109·0	123·0	127·6	127·7
1984-85	114·0	128·2	133·0	133·1
1985-86[5]	116·8	130·5	134·8	134·5
1986-87[5]	117·7	131·5	135·8	135·5
1987-88[5]	119·9	135·3	140·5	140·9

[1] Aged under 11.
[2] Two children aged under 11.
[3] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11-15.
[4] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11-15, one aged 16.
[5] Provisional.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for *(a)* two-earner families with a wife's earnings election and *(b)* other higher-rate taxpayers by tax category, his estimate of the number and distribution of incomes, together with the average unearned income and average amount of mortgage interest relief in each income band in each category in the next financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. 213]: Information is given in the tables. The estimates are based on a projection from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional.

Distribution of total income, 1987-88
For Higher Rate Tax Payers[1]

Range of total income Lower limit (£ pa)	Single people: Number of incomes ('000s)	Single people: Average amount of investment income[2] (£)	Single people: Average amount of mortgage interest relief[2] (£)	Married couples without wife's earnings: Number of incomes ('000s)	Married couples without wife's earnings: Average amount of investment income[2] (£)	Married couples without wife's earnings: Average amount of mortgage interest relief[2] (£)
20,000	65	9,100	610	60	5,300	350
25,000	55	9,600	1,160	100	3,400	950
30,000	25	12,300	1,390	50	4,600	1,250
35,000	10	13,000	1,430	35	7,200	1,400
40,000	20	14,700	1,220	45	7,300	1,550
50,000	25	34,700	1,770	55	19,900	1,750

Two-earner married couples

Range of total income Lower limit (£ pa)	Without a wife's earnings election: Number of incomes ('000s)	Without a wife's earnings election: Average amount of investment income[2] (£)	Without a wife's earnings election: Average amount of mortgage interest relief[2] (£)	With a wife's earnings election: Number of incomes ('000s)	With a wife's earnings election: Average amount of investment income[2] (£)	With a wife's earnings election: Average amount of mortgage interest relief[2] (£)
20,000	55	3,200	300	0	0	0
25,000	225	2,300	750	50	1,450	300
30,000	90	3,700	1,200	110	1,800	800
35,000	40	5,300	1,300	70	3,500	950
40,000	30	6,000	1,500	50	4,100	1,200
50,000	30	14,200	1,800	50	10,600	1,550

[1] Includes some 130 thousand tax units that are taken out of higher-rate tax following the wife's earnings election.
[2] Average based on those having investment income or mortgage relief as appropriate.

TUC and National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1978-79, an estimate for 1986-87 and a forecast for 1987-88 of the percentage of income paid in income tax and national insurance on the same basis as in table 5.12 of the latest edition of "Social Trends".

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is contained in the table. As requested, the figures are on the same basis as those in table 5.12 of "Social Trends", No. 17, and therefore the estimates for 1978-79 are not strictly comparable with those for 1986-87 and 1987-88 because of the change in the definition of a manual worker (*see* footnote [3]).

Percentage of income paid in income tax and national insurance contributions[1]

	Half average earnings[2]: Tax	Half average earnings[2]: NIC	Average earnings[2]: Tax	Average earnings[2]: NIC	Twice average earnings[2]: Tax	Twice average earnings[2]: NIC
Single Person						
1978-79[3]	15·8	6·5	20·4	6·5	28·7	4·5
1986-87	14·6	7·0	21·8	9·0	25·4	7·1
1987-88	13·9	7·0	20·3	9·0	23·7	6·9
Married couple[4]						
1978-79[3]	7·8	6·5	20·3	6·5	26·7	4·5
1986-87	6·4	7·0	17·7	9·0	23·4	7·1
1987-88	6·5	7·0	16·8	9·0	21·9	6·9

[1] Employee's contributions. Assumes contributions at Class 1, contracted in standard rate.
[2] Earnings are average earnings for full-time adult male *manual* employees working a full week.
[3] Average earnings for 1978-79 are based on males aged 21 or over, and on males paid at adult rates for 1986-87 and 1987-88. Average earnings for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are estimated by assuming increases of 7½ and 6½ per cent. respectively on the previous years in line with the assumptions used by the Government Actuary for reviewing national insurance contributions (paragraph 3.02 autumn statement).
[4] Assuming no wife's earnings.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the disposable income of a married man with two children and a wife who does not work at constant prices in 1978-79; and what is the predicted figure for 1986-87 (i) at half average earnings, (ii) at 75 per cent. average earnings, (iii) at 100 per cent. average earnings, (iv) at 150 per cent. average earnings and (v) at 200 per cent. average earnings.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is given in the table below. Average earnings are those for a man in full-time work paid at adult rates whose pay is not affected by absence. It has been assumed that the only tax relief or allowance available to the married couple is the married man's allowance. Net disposable income is taken to be gross income plus child benefit less income tax and national insurance contributions, assumed to be at the contracted-in rates.

Net disposable income of a married man with two children and a wife who does not work (£ per week)
Multiple of Average Earnings

	1978-79 £ per week	*1986-87 £ per week*
0·5		
At current prices	45·27	100·68
At 1986-87 prices	87·53	100·68
0·75		
At current prices	59·41	133·75
At 1986-87 prices	114·97	133·75
1		
At current prices	73·45	166·83
At 1986-87 prices	142·02	166·83
1·5		
At current prices	102·77	236·14
At 1986-87 prices	198·71	236·14
2		
At current prices	133·86	309·07
At 1986-87 prices	258·82	309·07

Benefits (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue yields in 1987-88 of the taxation of benefits other than unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue yield from the taxation of retirement pension, widows' benefits and invalid care allowance is estimated to be £1,500 million for 1987-88.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for those with and those without investment income in 1985-86 the numbers in each income band benefiting from mortgage interest relief; and if he will provide an estimate for 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is in the tables. The estimates are based on projections of the 1983, 1984 and 1985 family expenditure surveys and are therefore provisional.

Tax units[1] receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income—1985-86

(thousands)

Range of total income (£'000)	*Without investment income*	*With investment income*	*Total*
Under 4	330	360	690
4 to 5	40	70	110
5 to 6	70	140	210
6 to 7	100	220	320
7 to 8	130	310	440
8 to 9	160	420	580
9 to 10	160	470	630
10 to 12	300	950	1,250
12 to 15	310	1,180	1,490
15 to 20	210	1,130	1,340
20 to 25	40	390	430
25 to 30	20	210	230
Over 30	20	260	280
All	1,890	6,110	8,000

[1] Single persons and married couples and including about 500,000 non-taxpaying units.

Tax units[1] receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income—1987-88

(thousands)

Range of total income (£'000)	*Without investment income*	*With investment income*	*Total[2]*
Under 4	310	340	650
4 to 5	30	70	100
5 to 6	40	100	140
6 to 7	70	140	210
7 to 8	80	190	270
8 to 9	100	270	370
9 to 10	120	360	480
10 to 12	280	870	1,150
12 to 15	340	1,260	1,600
15 to 20	300	1,600	1,900
20 to 25	70	660	730
25 to 30	30	300	330
Over 30	30	440	470
All	1,800	6,600	8,400

[1] Single persons and married couples.
[2] Including about 500,000 non-taxpayers.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has received any representations about the administrative charges and fees levied by the managers of personal equity plan funds.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have received a small number of letters on this subject. Plan managers' charges can differ significantly, and potential investors would be well advised to shop around.

Experimental Performance Bonus Scheme

Mr. Speller asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column 142, if he will detail the terms and criteria for payments available under the experimental performance bonus scheme to Inland Revenue officers who are in direct contact with the public; how much has been actually paid out in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There are no special terms or criteria for bonus payments to officers who are in direct

contact with the public. Most eligible staff have contacts with the public to some extent. I am arranging to place in the House of Commons Library a copy of a statement setting out details of the performance bonus scheme as operated in the Inland Revenue in 1986-87 across the whole field of eligible staff. The total amount paid out in awards in 1986-87 was £508,740.

Students

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward legislation to remove the difference in tax treatment of students supported by grants and students supported by parental contribution while on higher education courses.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the normal way there is no difference in the tax treatment of students who receive grants either from their parents or from local authorities. Local authority maintenance grants to students are not liable to tax; nor are ordinary — non-covenanted — parental contributions to students' maintenance.

If the parent makes his contribution in the form of payments under a deed of covenant, the tax position is that the parent normally obtains tax relief for the payments by deducting basic rate tax from them. The payments form part of the student's taxable income, and by setting his personal allowances against them he may be entitled to repayment of the tax deducted at source.

European Commission (Infrastructure Strategy)

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the European Commission medium term infrastructure strategy will include powers to enable the Commission to guarantee loans to major construction projects.

Mr. Brooke: A recent European Commission communication on the financing of major Community infrastructure projects includes a proposal on Community budget guarantees for loans from the European Investment Bank. No date has yet been set for a discussion on the communication.

VAT

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate by how much the standard rate of value added tax could be reduced to produce the same revenue if all current zero rated and exempted items were liable.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) on 23 January at column 707.

Financial Services (VAT)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the yield in 1987-88 of extending value added tax to all financial services at present exempt under *(a)* European Economic Community rules and *(b)* otherwise; and if he will provide a breakdown by service.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Allowances

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the cost to the Exchequer of an increase of £100 in each of the allowances at the standard rate of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

VAT Inputs Frauds

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is able to give the latest information with regard to the precise or estimated amounts of value added tax inputs frauds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Forestry

Mr. Rogers asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assistance was given to the National Audit Office by the Forestry Commission in compiling the details of expected internal rates of return for various types of forest plantation published as appendix 4 of the NAO report, "Review of Forestry Commission Objectives and Achievements"; and what economic model was used to calculate these returns.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, "Review of Forestry Commission objectives and achievements" (HC 75), to the Public Accounts Committee, of which the hon. Gentleman is a member, made clear that the Forestry Commission provided the National Audit Office with planting and restocking models representative of the current planting programme. Appendix 4 of the report summarises the returns likely to be achieved for typical plantations.

Allowances and Reliefs

Mr. Clay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update for 1987-88 the information on the extra revenue resulting from allowing all tax allowances and reliefs at the standard rate only, provided in his reply of 1 May 1986 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, column 479-80.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Central Office of Information (Survey Research)

Mr. Gregory asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the sum expended on survey research by the Central Office of Information in each year since 1982.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Married Couples (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing in the case of the wife's earnings election the estimated cost to the Exchequer in the next

financial year, together with tables showing *(a)* the estimated loss of tax in terms of each combined gross income band and *(b)* for (i) husbands and (ii) wives, the numbers assessed separately by range of income together with the gross amount of income and the gross amount of unearned income;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the next financial year information concerning wife's earned income allowance on the same basis as given in his reply of 24 July 1986, *Official Report*, at column 467.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his replies of* 23 March 1987, c. *41* and 27 March 1987, c. 307]: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the information on the wife's earnings election in column 467 of the *Official Report* of 24 July 1986.

Estimates for 1987-88 of the numbers of elections, the direct revenue costs, and the levels of incomes expected are in the tables. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional.

Table 1—Wife's earnings elections, 1987-88

Range of joint total income (lower limit) (£ per annum)	*Elections (thousands)*	*Direct revenue costs (£ million)*
20,000	—	—
25,000	50	10
30,000	175	125
40,000	55	80
50,000	50	185
Total	330	400

Table 2—Wife's earnings elections, 1987-88 by husband's income

Range of husband's total income[1] (lower limit) (£ per annum)	*Elections (thousands)*	*Husband's income* *Aggregate total income[1] (£ million)*	*Aggregate investment income (£ million)*
10,000	10	160	15
15,000	80	1,350	75
20,000	160	3,900	270
30,000	60	2,070	220
50,000	20	1,560	230

[1] Total income is husband's earned income plus husband's investment income.

Table 3—Wife's earnings elections, 1987-88 by wife's income

Range of wife's total income[1] (lower limit) (£ per annum)	*Elections (thousands)*	*Wife's income* *Aggregate total income[1] (£ million)*	*Aggregate investment income (£ million)*
5,000	100	810	15
10,000	140	1,690	45
15,000	50	860	55
20,000	30	640	60
30,000	10	530	55

[1] Total income is wife's earned income plus wife's investment income.

Taxable Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for 1987-88 of the taxable value of benefits subject to (i) special and (ii) general rules, together with the estimated revenue therefrom.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *215*]: Available information, based on projections from 1983-84, the latest year for which detailed data are available, is as follows:

1987-88, £ million

Benefit provided by employer	*Taxable value*	*Tax yield*
Cars and free fuel for private use	1,300	460
Private medical insurance	130	50
Other expense payments and benefits	320	120
Total	1,750	630

Married Man's Allowance

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, in the light of the 1987 Budget, the information on the married man's allowance provided in his reply of 14 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, column 315.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *215*]: The direct revenue cost of the married man's allowance in excess of the single person's allowance is estimated to be £4·6 billion in a full year at 1987-88 income levels of which £3·9 billion is attributable to those aged under 65. The extra relief is worth £7·11 per week in 1987-88 to a basic rate taxpayer not entitled to age allowance.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to 1987-88 the information on real net earnings provided in his reply of 10 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, columns 193-94.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *215*]: The infomation is as follows:

Changes in real net earnings after Income Tax and NIC (1956-57 = 100)

	Multiples of average earnings				
	½	*1*	*2*	*5*	*10*
Single					
1978-79	124·9	125·3	132·8	120·1	108·3
1987-88	151·8	154·9	165·8	166·0	191·0
Married					
1978-79	126·8	123·9	132·4	121·1	109·0
1987-88	152·3	151·8	165·6	165·7	189·6

Excise Duties

Mr. Gardiner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the estimated receipts in 1986-87 and the forecast receipts in 1987-88 from excise duties on spirits, beer, wine, made wine, cider and perry, respectively; and if he will explain any differences or special factors.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *630*]: The information is as follows:

	1986-87 £ million[1]	1987-88 £ million[2]
Spirits	1,500	1,530
Beer	1,970	2,010
Wine	640	685
Made wine	60	65
Cider and Perry	50	55
Total	4,220	4,345

[1] Latest estimates.
[2] Forecast.

Companies (Depreciation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1957 the amount set aside by industrial and commercial companies out of profits for depreciation and the amount spent on new plant and equipment.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *395*]: Information, taken from the DTI's analysis of the published accounts of industrial and commercial companies in Great Britain, on the amounts set aside for depreciation is given in the table below. There are a number of breaks in the series; the analysis has only covered the whole industrial and commercial company sector since 1977. The accounts used in the analysis are the consolidated annual accounts of industrial and commercial company groups, which may include financial and overseas subsidiaries, and the accounts of independent companies registered in Great Britain. Great Britain subsidiaries of companies registered in Northern Ireland or overseas are also included. Fuller notes on coverage are given in the references.

Figures of gross domestic fixed capital formation in plant and machinery by industrial and commercial companies are given in the table below. These figures, which are mainly based on inquiries by the Business Statistics Office, include the purchase of new and secondhand assets whereas sales of plant and machinery are deducted. The figures relate to assets located in the United Kingdom and are published annually in the CSO Blue Book—table 10.3 of the 1986 edition. Figures are not available for years prior to 1965.

Amounts set aside by industrial and commercial companies for depreciation

	£ million
1957	393
1958	443
1959	486
1960	560
1961	621
1962	683
1963	749
1964	905
1965	1,012
1966	1,097
1967	1,124
1968	1,254
1969	1,323
1970	1,431
1971	1,591
1972	1,754
1973	1,992
1974	2,222
1975	2,513
1976	2,896
1977	3,217
New series:	
1977	5,348
1978	6,525
1979	7,749
1980	8,967
1981	10,569
1982	10,600
Large Companies only:	
1983	9,245
1984	11,755

1957-59:
Quoted companies only.
Source: Economic Trends No. 102 April 1962.
1960-64:
Quoted and unquoted. All public and some private companies with net assets of £500,000 or more or gross income of £50,000 or more in 1960.
Source: Business Monitor 2nd and 4th Issues.
1965-68:
Based on all public and some private companies with net assets of £500,000 or more or gross income of £50,000 or more in 1964.
Source: Business Monitor, Misc. 3, 2nd and 4th Issues.
1969-74:
Based on companies with net assets of £2 million or more or gross income of £200,000 or more in 1968.
Source: Business Monitor, Misc. Annual MA3, 11th Issue.
1975-77:
Based on net assets of £5 million or more or gross income of £500,000 or more in 1973.
Source: Business Monitor, MA3, 11th Issue.
1977-84:
Based on representative sample of all industrial and commercial companies. Figures for 1983-84 are preliminary estimates based on large companies only and include write-offs.
Source: Business Monitor, MA3, 12th and 17th Issues.

Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation in Plant and Machinery by Industrial and Commercial Companies

	£ million
1965	1,313
1966	1,392
1967	1,397
1968	1,545
1969	1,688
1970	1,957
1971	2,013
1972	1,980
1973	2,315
1974	2,899
1975	3,525
1976	4,446
1977	5,502
1978	6,839
1979	8,094
1980	8,507
1981	8,174
1982	8,825
1983	9,458
1984	11,244
1985	14,611
1986	15,632

North Sea Oil

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, on the same basis as table 5.1 in the 1986 edition of the United Kingdom national accounts, he will publish in the *Official Report* separate figures for North sea oil companies showing tax paid on profits due abroad and tax paid on other income.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *395*]: I regret that this information is not available for all taxes.

Double Taxation Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect of an increase in the rate of corportion tax on double taxation relief on the overseas earnings of company profits; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of double taxation relief in the latest year for which information is available, the amount of tax on which relief was given, and the change in relief consequent on a 1 per cent. increase in corporation tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *396-7*]: An increase in the rate of corporation tax would increase the ceiling of United Kingdom tax against which double taxation relief could be claimed and would therefore, depending on the level of the overseas tax, entitle companies to a greater measure of relief.

The latest year for which information is available on the amount of double taxation relief and foreign taxes paid is 1983 and figures have already been provided to the hon. Member for that year in my reply of 23 March 1987, at column 43. No estimate is available of the effect of a one percentage point change in the main rate of corportion tax on the amount of relief which can be claimed.

Unearned Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by personal category and range of income the number of women with gross unearned income of £1,000 a year or more, and those with less, together with the average amount of unearned income in each category.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. 41]: The estimates given in the table below are based on a projection from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and they are therefore provisional. Since the survey does not provide comprehensive coverage of investment income on which the liability to basic rate tax has been satisfied at source, the estimates for the ranges other than the higher income ranges are likely to be incomplete.

Females with investment income in 1986-87 by range of total income of female

	Single females				*Married females*			
	Gross investment income greater than or equal to £1,000 pa		*Gross investment income less than £1,000 but greater than £0 pa*		*Gross investment income greater than or equal to £1,000 pa*		*Gross investment income less than £1,000 but greater than £0 pa*	
Total income lower limit (£ pa)	*Numbers* ('000s)	*Average investment income* (£ pa)	*Numbers* ('000s)	*Average investment income* (£ pa)	*Numbers* ('000s)	*Average investment income* (£ pa)	*Numbers* ('000s)	*Average investment income* (£ pa)
2,000	210	1,950	430	300	140	2,060	290	240
5,000	250	3,450	220	300	110	3,720	220	230
10,000	90	6,600	45	300	40	4,360	90	260
15,000	50	7,650	10	280	20	5,970	15	350
20,000	45	21,500	10	200	15	18,300	5	290

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the distribution of gross unearned incomes, including tax credits, in the coming financial year by range of income in steps to £1,000 to £20,000 divided between elderly and other taxpayers and between single persons and one-earner and two-earner households.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *214*]: The latest available estimates are given in the table. They are based on a projection from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional. Some income ranges have been combined in order to provide reliable estimates. Since the survey does not provide comprehensive coverage of investment income on which the liability to basic rate tax has been satisfied, the estimates for the ranges other than the higher income ranges are likely to be incomplete.

Distribution of investment income 1987-88

Numbers

	Taxpayers aged under 65			*Taxpayers aged over 65*		
Range of total investment income lower limit (£ pa)	*Single people* ('000s)	*Married couples without wife's earned income* ('000s)	*Married couples with wife's earned income* ('000s)	*Single people* ('000s)	*Married couples without wife's earned income* ('000s)	*Married couples with wife's earned income* ('000s)
1,000	320	140	330	165	100	60
2,000	160	60	130	75	55	50
3,000	60	40	90	70	35	20
4,000	30	20	70	40	25	30
5,000	35	25	35	30	15	25
6,000	20	10	25	30	15	5
7,000	10	10	25	20	5	5
8,000	5	5	20	15	5	5
9,000	10	10	15	20	5	5

Range of total investment income lower limit (£ pa)	Taxpayers aged under 65			Taxpayers aged over 65		
	Single people ('000s)	Married couples without wife's earned income ('000s)	Married couples with wife's earned income ('000s)	Single people ('000s)	Married couples without wife's earned income ('000s)	Married couples with wife's earned income ('000s)
10,000	10	10	25	20	10	15
12,000	10	10	20	15	5	10
15,000	10	5	15	20	10	5
20,000	15	10	15	25	15	10

Corporation Tax

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of his proposals relating to corporation tax on the capital gains of companies on life assurance companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1987, c. *560*]: The Budget proposals for changes in the taxation of companies' gains will apply to life assurance companies. For disposals made by life assurance companies on or after 17 March 1987, the rate of tax will be 35 per cent.

The effects of this change on such companies will vary according to the level of chargeable gains realised and the basis on which tax provisions are attributed to policyholders. The proceeds on maturity or surrender of policies often reflect provision for future tax liabilities which may arise when the life company realises assets. The extent to which such provision is made varies widely and is entirely a matter for each company. Many make a heavily discounted provision, computed on the basis that chargeable gains are unlikely to be realised for many years.

Moreover, substantial deductions—for example, for management expenses — can be set against life companies' gains and a significant proportion of such tax as life companies pay on their gains is on gains reserved for shareholders and does not affect returns on policyholders' funds.

There is no reason, therefore, why the change proposed need have a substantial general impact on policyholders' returns.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his forecast of the increase in revenue from corporation tax and advance corporation tax in the current year and in the next financial year; and if he will provide separate figures for *(a)* North sea oil and gas companies, *(b)* other industrial and commercial companies and *(c)* financial companies and institutions.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *395*]: Information is in the following table. A reliable breakdown of tax receipts between industrial and commercial companies and financial institutions is not available for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Receipts of corporation tax (CT)

(£ million)

	All companies and financial institutions[1] of which		North sea	
	Total CT	ACT	CT	ACT Set-off[2]
1985-86	10,708	3,808	2,923	1,092
1986-87[3]	13,400	4,400	2,700	1,100
1987-88[4]	15,000	4,700	1,400	800

[1] Including North sea companies.
[2] Liability to corporation tax arising in respect of North sea production may be satisfied by setting off ACT arising on dividends paid in previous periods in respect of both onshore and offshore activities. Dividends and ACT associated with North sea activities alone cannot be identified.
[3] Provisional outturn.
[4] Forecast.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the yield of an increase of 1 percentage point in the rate of corporation tax at the present rate of profitability, all other things remaining unchanged.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *395*]: An increase of one percentage point in the 35 per cent. main rate of corporation tax would yield approximately £400 million in a full year at 1986-87 levels of income.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the rate of corporation tax in or equivalent company taxes in other industrial countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *395*]: The information requested is given in the table, which covers EEC countries and major industrial OECD countries outside the EEC.

Basic rate of central government corporation tax

	Rate percentage
EEC	
Belgium	43·0
Denmark	50·0
France	45·0
Germany	56·0
Greece	44·0
Ireland	50·0
Italy	36·0
Luxembourg	40·0
Netherlands	42·0
Portugal	45·0
Spain	35·0
United Kingdom	35·0
OECD outside EEC	
Australia	46·0
Austria	55·0
Canada	36·0
Japan	43·3
Sweden	52·0
United States of America	46·0

Notes:

1. The rates shown apply to undistributed profits. Lower rates apply to distributed profits in Germany, Austria and Japan. No tax is charged on distributed profits in Greece.

2. There are lower rates for smaller companies in Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, United Kingdom, Austria, Canada, Japan and the United States of America.

3. There are local income taxes on companies in Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Austria, Canada, Japan and the United States of America. These increase the tax burden on companies in these countries.

DEFENCE

Defence Contracts

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy not to award defence contracts to prime contractors who do not observe the code of practice for competitive subcontracting in their terms of payment to subcontractors.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 24 March 1987, at column 141. The code of practice is a guidance document and it would be inappropriate to make it mandatory, particularly as the relationship between contractors and their sub-contractors is a matter for the parties themselves and one in which the MOD should not be directly involved. Having said that, I am very willing to look into any particular case of difficulty which my hon. Friend cares to draw to my attention.

Porton Down

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify all contracts or agreements between his Department's Porton Down establishment and universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, has currently 76 research agreements with 36 institutions of higher education. It is not our policy to give details of these agreements.

Weekly Temperatures

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the weekly mean temperature for the weather stations of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and of the official meteorological record for Carnwater, for each week of January in each of the years 1982 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I assume the right hon. Member is referring to Carnwath. Tabulated data for Glasgow airport, Edinburgh airport and Carnwath for each week in the months of January from 1982 to 1987 inclusive are provided below:

Week Monday to Sunday	*Weekly Mean Temperature (°C) Carnwath*	*Glasgow Airport*	*Edinburgh Airport*
28 December 1981— 3 January 1982	1·3	3·0	2·7
4 January 1982— 10 January 1982	−7·7	−4·6	−4·7
11 January 1982— 17 January 1982	−4·7	−2·0	−3·7
18 January 1982— 24 January 1982	4·6	6·4	5·4
25 January 1982— 31 January 1982	5·7	7·3	7·3
27 December 1982— 2 January 1983	4·5	6·1	5·9
3 January 1983— 9 January 1983	3·8	5·2	5·0
10 January 1983— 16 January 1983	5·3	7·0	7·0
17 January 1983— 23 January 1983	2·1	4·9	4·2
24 January 1983— 30 January 1983	4·4	6·2	5·9
2 January 1984— 8 January 1984	2·0	4·0	3·3
9 January 1984— 15 January 1984	1·7	3·5	3·5
16 January 1984— 22 January 1984	−3·9	−1·1	−0·8
23 January 1984— 29 January 1984	−1·0	−0·0	0·2
30 January 1984— 5 February 1984	1·2	3·4	3·4
31 December 1984— 6 January 1985	0·2	1·5	2·1
7 January 1985— 13 January 1985	−2·5	−0·8	−0·0
14 January 1985— 20 January 1985	−1·7	0·5	0·7
21 January 1985— 27 January 1985	−4·1	−1·5	−1·6
28 January 1985— 3 February 1985	4·6	5·7	5·4
30 December 1985— 5 January 1986	−1·8	0·2	0·4
6 January 1986— 12 January 1986	0·9	2·4	2·3
13 January 1986— 19 January 1986	2·0	3·9	3·3
20 January 1986— 26 January 1986	0·6	2·4	2·3
27 January 1986— 2 February 1986	0·6	1·7	1·9
29 December 1986— 4 January 1987	1·6	2·9	3·5
5 January 1987— 11 January 1987	−2·7	−0·6	−1·2
12 January 1987— 18 January 1987	−2·7	−1·2	−1·3
19 January 1987— 25 January 1987	2·3	4·5	4·9
26 January 1987— 1 February 1987	−1·8	−0·8	0·5

Ministry of Defence
Monday 6 April 1987

Mozambique

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom military personnel are currently based in Mozambique; if he will publish details of their duties; and what is the total cost to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: There are no United Kingdom military personnel currently based in Mozambique. However, at the request of the Government of Mozambique, and with the agreement of the Zimbabwean Government, the British military advisory and training team in Zimbabwe is providing a limited programme of training to members of the Mozambican army.

"20 Questions on Defence"

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much it cost his Department to produce the leaflet, "20 Questions on Defence"; how many copies have been printed; what were their production costs; and how many copies have been issued to the public.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the evidence on which he bases the second sentence in the 13th section of his Department's leaflet "20 Questions on Defence", dealing with cruise missiles.

Mr. Stanley: The unclassified evidence for this statement is set out in the course of paragraphs 3 to 18 of Defence open government document 87/1 "Trident and the Alternative". The unclassified evidence is in turn based on a recent classified updating by the Department's senior civilian and service staffs of material in Defence open government documents 80/23 and 82/1.

"Trident and the Alternatives"

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much it cost his Department to produce the document "Trident and the Alternatives"; how many copies have been printed; what were their production costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Indonesia

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the supply to the Indonesian armed forces of 5 Battery Command post processor computer software systems, manufactured by British Aerospace; on what date the end-user certificates were issued; what discussions his Department has had to ensure such equipment is not destined for military use in East Timor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Battery Command post processor is a part of the British Aerospace Rapier low level air defence system, and acts as an aid to the Battery commander to enable him to site his fire units in the most effective position. The BCPP is a non-critical part of the Rapier system, and has no use outside the context of Rapier.

I understand that Rapier is not intended to be based in East Timor—in any event, as an air defence system, it would have no role in the current internal security difficulties in that state.

Defence Budget

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 4 March 1987, *Official Report*, column *602*, why the savings made in his budget during 1986-87 are not expected for 1987-88; what criteria he uses for the selection of priorities; what assessment he has made of the implications for progress towards the Government's energy efficiency targets of the reduction in the budget for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will answer shortly.

Nuclear Waste (Gillingham)

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet considered the several representations made by the hon. Members for Gillingham and for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) regarding the storage of additional nuclear waste at Ministry of Defence, Gillingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have carefully considered the proposal to transport nuclear material to MOD Gillingham for temporary storage. I have concluded that alternative arrangements can be made which do not involve the storage of any further material in MOD Gillingham. I can assure my right hon. friend, therefore, that no nuclear material will be transported to MOD Gillingham for storage.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the changes in the total number of Soviet troops deployed in Eastern Europe since 1979.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 March 1987, c. *454*]: The total number of Soviet ground forces deployed in Eastern Europe has since 1979 been consistently above 500,000. At the beginning of 1979, this represented 31 motor rifle and tank divisions but, following the withdrawal that year of one motor rifle division from the German Democratic Republic to the Soviet Union, the total number of divisions has since remained constant at 30. The considerable qualitative improvement in Soviet ground and air forces in Eastern Europe over this period are referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 of annex A of volume 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986".

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy on the future role of dual-capable United States Air Force F-111 aircraft based in Britain in the light of the proposal by the commander-in-chief of the United States Strategic Air Command that these aircraft should be converted to carry air-launched cruise missiles in the event of all intermediate range nuclear force missiles being removed from Europe;

(2) what consideration is being given by his Department to the role of nuclear-armed air-launched cruise or stand-off missiles in the event of the complete removal of intermediate range nuclear force missiles from Europe.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 March 1987, c. *453-54*]: The implications of removing LRINF missiles from Europe for the remaining theatre nuclear stockpile are under review in NATO. No conclusions have yet been reached.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Burnley General Hospital

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects phase III of Burnley general hospital to be fully operational.

Mr. Newton: The first patients were admitted to phase III of Burnley general hospital in December 1986. The hospital will be fully operational in the next few months.

Benefits

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the number of people estimated to be eligible for housing benefit who do not claim it in both certificated and standard cases.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he can now provide the latest estimates for the take up of family income supplement and housing benefit broken down by numbers entitled to claim, proportion receiving benefit and estimated amount of unclaimed benefit per annum and per week.

Mr. Lyell: Updated estimates of the take-up of family income supplement and new estimates of the take-up of housing benefit, are expected to be published shortly.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the extent of losses affecting recipients of housing benefit as a result of changes to the scheme effective from April in the current year and the proposed change to the scheme in April 1988.

Mr. Lyell: The effects of this April's changes to the housing benefit scheme were outlined during my right hon. Friend's uprating statement on 22 October 1986 at columns 1174-75, and have since been amplified in a number of written answers to hon. Members. The effects of next April's changes were extensively illustrated in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9691, and also amplified in a number of subsequent written answers, but cannot be finally judged until the various benefit rates are set later this year.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims are outstanding for social security benefits at the Dundee local offices of his Department; and if he will disaggregate the claims per benefit.

Mr. Lyell: The table sets out the information requested about outstanding claims to social security benefits. Figures are for 10 March 1987:

	Number
Dundee East	
Sickness/invalidity benefit	51
Maternity allowance	29
Retirement pension	119
Severe disablement allowance	38
Supplementary benefit	119
Dundee West	
Sickness/invalidity benefit	89
Maternity allowance	32
Retirement pension	98
Severe disablement allowance	25
Supplementary benefit	155

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the number of people in receipt of supplementary benefit in *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Aberdeen, *(c)* Glasgow and *(d)* Edinburgh in 1979; and what are the latest available figures.

Mr. Lyell: Dundee is covered by two of the Department's offices, Aberdeen by two, Glasgow by 13 and Edinburgh by five but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the cities. The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from offices in those cities on 20 February 1979 and 10 February 1987 —the latest date for which information is available—are shown in the table.

	20 February 1979	*10 February 1987*
Dundee	16,074	22,995
Aberdeen	12,211	19,612
Glasgow	77,527	147,935
Edinburgh	30,035	55,589

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the operation of the housing benefit system where changes in benefit take place on the death of a spouse and the difficulties which may arise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: We are not aware of any particular difficulties which arise when a spouse dies and no alterations are planned in this area of the housing benefit scheme. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would like to put the details in a letter to me.

AIDS

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional funds are being made available to the Brighton health authority for coping with the problems of AIDS victims and for improving and upgrading the hospital ward used for treating them.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to make enquiries directly to the South East Thames regional health authority.

Care in the Community Programme

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals have been *(a)* closed and *(b)* partially closed; and how many beds are affected under the care in the community programme in each of the following categories: (i) mentally ill, (ii) mentally handicapped and (iii) elderly.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available in exactly the form requested. The table gives figures for approvals, following public consultation, of hospital closures given since the beginning of 1983, the year in which the Department's "Care in the Community Initiative" was launched. Records are not held centrally of the dates on which closures so approved are implemented; actual closures since 1983 have included some approved before then and some of the approvals recorded in the table may not yet have been implemented. There are a number of reasons why hospital beds are closed and not all of the approvals recorded in the table were consequent upon the development of community based facilities. Indeed, in many cases in the geriatric and psychiatric services, beds in new units are replacing those closed.

	Number of hospitals	Number of beds affected in these hospitals
(a) Approvals for total closure given since 1 January 1983		
Mental illness	14	2,199
Mental handicap	16	912
Geriatric	35	2,852
Other hospitals in which there were mental illness, mental handicap or geriatric beds	13	1,135
(b) Approvals for partial closure given since 1 January 1983		
Mental illness	6	354
Mental handicap	3	196
Geriatric	1	80
Other hospitals in which there were mental illness, mental handicap or geriatric beds	5	254

Hospital Waiting Lists (East Berkshire)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are on the waiting list for in-patient treatment for each specialty in each hospital in east Berkshire; and what were the comparable figures in January 1986.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The information available centrally is given in the table. For current information the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the East Berkshire district health authority.

NHS hospitals in East Berkshire district health authority

Hospital/specialty	Number[1]
Wexham Park, Slough	
General surgery	795
Ear, nose and throat	1,141
Traumatic and orthopaedic	312
Plastic surgery	1,695
Oral surgery	309
Gynaecology	430
Total	4,682
King Edward VII, Windsor	
General surgery	396
Ophthalmology	825
Oral surgery	182
Gynaecology	232
Total	1,635
Heatherwood, Ascot	
General surgery	410
Traumatic and orthopaedic	270
Gynaecology	409
Total	1,089
Church Hill House, Bracknell	
Mental handicap	8
Total	8
Farnham Park Rehabilitation Centre, Slough	
Rehabilitation (Physical Medicine)	117
Total	117

[1] Cases on in-patient waiting list at 31 December 1985.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about his policy on the 1987 recommendations of the review board for nurses' and midwives' remuneration.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress made by the pay review board dealing with nurses' pay.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report of the pay review body for nursing and midwifery and health visitors.

Mr. Newton: The Pay Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine will submit its report for 1987 to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for consideration in due course.

As has been the case with all Governments since the review body system was established, review body reports are implemented except where there are clear and compelling reasons not to do so.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district health authority in England the total number of beds in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984 for 1984 and 1985; and what percentage change this represents.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Total number of beds in institutions registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984[1]

Region and District Health Authorities	Total beds 1984	1985	Percentage change
Northern Regional Health Authority			
Hartlepool	12	45	275·0
North Tees	36	44	22·2
South Tees	99	123	24·2
East Cumbria	102	98	−3·9
South Cumbria	151	172	13·9
West Cumbria	30	30	0·0
Darlington	264	322	22·0
Durham	39	35	−10·3
North West Durham	0	0	—
South West Durham	0	20	—
Northumberland	70	68	−2·9
Gateshead	40	40	0·0
Newcastle	79	118	49·4
North Tyneside	0	0	—
South Tyneside	0	0	—
Sunderland	0	0	—
RHA Total	922	1,115	20·9
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority			
Hull	91	129	41·8
East Yorkshire	53	75	41·5
Grimsby	33	60	81·8
Scunthorpe	67	72	7·5
Northallerton	125	161	28·8
York	328	438	33·5

Region and District Health Authorities	Total beds 1984	1985	Percentage change
Scarborough	176	306	73·9
Harrogate	655	807	23·2
Bradford	196	252	28·6
Airedale	302	462	53·0
Calderdale	168	272	61·9
Huddersfield	36	69	91·7
Dewsbury	23	28	21·7
Leeds Western	186	202	8·6
Leeds Eastern	375	391	4·3
Wakefield	0	25	—
Pontefract	0	0	—
RHA Total	2,814	3,749	33·2
Trent Regional Health Authority			
North Derbyshire	109	110	0·9
Southern Derbyshire	271	374	38·0
Leicestershire	507	599	18·1
North Lincolnshire	472	642	36·0
South Lincolnshire	112	158	41·1
Bassetlaw	0	23	—
Central Nottinghamshire	88	166	88·6
Nottingham	636	857	34·7
Barnsley	0	0	—
Doncaster	102	144	41·2
Rotherham	35	38	8·6
Sheffield	264	326	23·5
RHA Total	2,596	3,437	32·4
East Anglian Regional Health Authority			
Cambridge	150	234	56·0
Peterborough	55	85	54·5
West Suffolk	160	174	8·8
East Suffolk	162	203	25·3
Norwich	332	392	18·1
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	49	49	0·0
West Norfolk and Wisbech	80	115	43·8
Huntingdon	33	54	63·6
RHA Total	1,021	1,306	27·9
North West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North Bedfordshire	129	177	37·2
South Bedfordshire	22	22	0·0
North Hertfordshire	161	188	16·8
East Hertfordshire	174	174	0·0
North West Hertfordshire	97	131	35·1
South West Hertfordshire	153	153	0·0
Barnet	357	361	1·1
Harrow	122	122	0·0
Hillingdon	132	135	2·3
Hounslow and Spelthorne	136	136	0·0
Ealing	288	292	1·4
Brent	66	66	0·0
Paddington and North Kensington	45	42	−6·7
Riverside[2]	653	713	9·2
RHA Total	2,535	2,712	7·0
North East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Basildon and Thurrock	0	0	—
Mid Essex	169	182	7·7
North East Essex	243	325	33·7
West Essex	152	163	7·2
Southend	263	322	22·4
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	213	215	0·9
Hampstead	241	241	0·0
Bloomsbury	1,271	1,175	−7·6
Islington	0	30	—
City and Hackney	112	108	−3·6
Newham	0	0	—
Tower Hamlets	0	14	—
Enfield	161	157	−2·5
Haringey	195	185	−5·1
Redbridge	107	120	12·1
Waltham Forest	0	0	—
RHA Total	3,127	3,237	3·5
South East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Brighton	1,233	1,352	9·7
Eastbourne	1,065	1,134	6·5
Hastings	951	965	1·5
South East Kent	386	454	17·6
Canterbury and Thanet	501	583	16·4
Dartford and Gravesham	50	76	52·0
Maidstone	253	256	1·2
Medway	65	65	0·0
Tunbridge Wells	681	739	8·5
Bexley	57	100	75·4
Greenwich	40	40	0·0
Bromley	491	501	2·0
West Lambeth	47	64	36·2
Camberwell	19	19	0·0
Lewisham and North Southwark	210	250	19·0
RHA Total	6,049	6,598	9·1
South West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North West Surrey	264	312	18·2
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	182	342	87·9
South West Surrey	697	717	2·9
Mid Surrey	234	399	70·5
East Surrey	434	504	16·1
Chichester	524	591	12·8
Mid Downs	499	594	19·0
Worthing	890	995	11·8
Croydon	467	561	20·1
Kingston and Esher	145	187	29·0
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	427	458	7·3
Wandsworth	0	302	—
Merton and Sutton	530	561	5·8
RHA Total	5,293	6,523	23·2
Wessex Regional Health Authority			
East Dorset	1,258	1,584	25·9
West Dorset	158	181	14·6

Region and District Health Authorities	Total beds 1984	1985	Percentage change
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	575	652	13·4
Southampton and South West Hampshire	427	444	4·0
Winchester	248	319	28·6
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	115	120	4·3
Salisbury	253	266	5·1
Swindon	120	124	3·3
Bath	460	506	10·0
Isle of Wight	158	162	2·5
RHA Total	3,772	4,358	15·5
Oxford Regional Health Authority			
East Berkshire	486	587	20·8
West Berkshire	177	304	71·8
Aylesbury Vale	116	171	47·4
Wycombe	304	299	−1·6
Milton Keynes	94	114	21·3
Kettering	0	12	—
Northampton	694	642	−7·5
Oxfordshire	443	589	33·0
RHA Total	2,314	2,718	17·5
South Western Regional Health Authority			
Bristol and Weston	769	1,043	35·6
Frenchay	117	117	0·0
Southmead	299	460	53·8
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	592	680	14·9
Exeter	509	591	16·1
North Devon	259	286	10·4
Plymouth	522	777	48·9
Torbay	577	659	14·2
Cheltenham	293	336	14·7
Gloucester	215	309	43·7
Somerset	275	416	51·3
RHA Total	4,427	5,674	28·2
West Midlands Regional Health Authority			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	70	86	22·9
Herefordshire	132	161	22·0
Kidderminster and District	112	130	16·1
Worcester and District	498	638	28·1
Shropshire	93	134	44·1
Mid Staffordshire	208	294	41·3
North Staffordshire	126	145	15·1
South East Staffordshire	81	144	77·8
Rugby	18	28	55·6
North Warwickshire	82	113	37·8
South Warwickshire	462	472	2·2
Central Birmingham	287	270	−5·9
East Birmingham	86	106	23·3
North Birmingham	187	188	0·5
South Birmingham	79	109	38·0
West Birmingham	53	53	0·0
Coventry	22	22	0·0
Dudley	21	21	0·0
Sandwell	30	51	70·0
Solihull	84	84	0·0
Walsall	0	41	—
Wolverhampton	145	153	5·5
RHA Total	2,876	3,443	19·7
Mersey Regional Health Authority			
Chester	91	146	60·4
Crewe	85	100	17·6
Halton	0	0	—
Macclesfield	285	359	26·0
Warrington	0	8	—
Liverpool	254	365	43·7
St. Helens and Knowsley	225	226	0·4
Southport and Formby	647	733	13·3
South Sefton	200	226	13·0
Wirral	662	838	26·6
RHA Total	2,449	3,001	22·5
North Western Regional Health Authority			
Lancaster	98	108	10·2
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	370	506	36·8
Preston	124	80	−35·5
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	147	147	0·0
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	87	108	24·1
West Lancashire	18	18	0·0
Chorley and South Ribble	252	321	27·4
Bolton	100	134	34·0
Bury	86	105	22·1
North Manchester	52	51	−1·9
Central Manchester	0	0	—
South Manchester	170	214	25·9
Oldham	8	8	0·0
Rochdale	201	203	1·0
Salford	56	78	39·3
Stockport	756	821	8·6
Tameside and Glossop	0	0	—
Trafford	168	188	11·9
Wigan	10	24	140·0
RHA Total	2,703	3,114	15·2

[1] Formerly institutions registered under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975, as amended.
[2] Formerly Hammersmith & Fulham and Victoria Health Authorities.

Maternity Payments

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has received in the last six months condemning the reductions in maternity benefits introduced in the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Lyell: We have received approximately 240 letters concerning the new maternity benefit arrangements during the last six months. Precise information about the number of these letters which condemn reductions in maternity benefits is not available.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 11 February at column *274*.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Leicester claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested.

The numbers of claims for maternity grant received at the Department's four Leicester local offices during the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Leicester (Burley's Way)	1,775
Leicester (Lower Hill Street)	2,099
Leicester (Norton Street)	2,581
Leicester (Yeoman Street)	3,022

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Langbaurgh constituency claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Redcar (Mr. Tinn) on 12 February at column *357*.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sunderland, North constituency claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested.

Sunderland, North constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Sunderland, South and Sunderland, North although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the two local offices in the 1986 calendar year was as follows:

	Number
Sunderland South	1,442
Sunderland North	2,097

Benefits (Scotland)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for outstanding claims for social security benefits in Scotland; and what is the average waiting time by type of benefit.

Mr. Lyell: The average time taken by local offices in Scotland to deal with claims to social security benefits is shown in the table. Figures are for the four weeks ending 10 March 1987.

Benefit	*Number of days*
Supplementary benefit	4
Sickness/Invalidity benefit	8
Maternity Allowance	10
Retirement Pension	22

Runaway Children

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the action taken by Her Majesty's Government on the problem of runaway children since the statement to the House by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), on 27 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns 1137-42.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has continued to provide some professional and revenue support to the Central London Teenage Project, a safe house run by the Children's Society, which offers short-term accommodation, care and counselling to young people who run away to London. A £20,000 grant was paid in 1986-87 and a grant of the same level has been approved for 1987-88.

The White Paper on The Law on Child Care and Family Services, Cm. 62, proposes that certain specified organisations who look after children who have run away should, in defined circumstances, be exempt from liability for an offence of detaining or harbouring a child.

Death (Causes)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the 20 major causes of death in the United Kingdom for the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows, separately for males and females, in descending order of magnitude, the 20 major causes of death in the United Kingdom in 1985. The list of causes is that used in compiling statistics for the Chief Medical Officer's annual report "On the State of the Public Health for the year 1985".

Number of deaths from twenty major causes of death in the United Kingdom, by sex, all ages, 1985

ICD[1] number	*Cause of Death*	*Number of deaths*
Males		
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	104,467
430-438	Cerebrovascular disease	31,597
160-165	Malignant neoplasm of respiratory and intrathoracic organs	30,790
150-159	Malignant neoplasm of digestive organs and peritoneum	24,130
390-405, 415-429, 440-459	Other diseases of the circulatory system	23,217
490-496	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and allied conditions	22,971
480-486	Pneumonia	12,670
179-189	Malignant neoplasm of genitourinary organs	12,668
520-579	Diseases of the digestive system	8,722

ICD[1] number	Cause of Death	Number of deaths
190-199	Malignant of other and unspecified sites	7,232
320-389	Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs	5,989
E800-E807, E830-E949, E960-E999	Other causes of injury and poisoning	5,957
200-208	Malignant neoplasm of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue	5,270
290-319	Mental disorders	4,520
240-279	Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases and immunity disorders	4,355
580-629	Diseases of the genitourinary system	4,245
E810-E829	Road vehicle accidents	4,044
E950-E959	Suicide and self-inflicted injury	3,421
460-478, 487, 500-519	Other diseases of the respiratory system	3,263
740-759	Congenital anomalies	1,687
Females		
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	82,191
430-438	Cerebrovascular disease	52,068
390-405, 415-429, 440-459	Other diseases of the circulatory system	33,924
150-159	Malignant neoplasm of digestive organs and peritoneum	22,380
480-486	Pneumonia	20,792
170-175	Malignant neoplasm of bone, connective tissue, skin and breast	16,298
520-579	Diseases of the digestive system	11,884
160-165	Malignant neoplasm of respiratory and intrathoracic organs	11,689
179-189	Malignant neoplasm of genitourinary organs	11,396
490-496	Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and allied conditions	11,255
290-319	Mental disorders	8,469
190-199	Malignant of other and unspecified sites	7,549
320-389	Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs	6,401
240-279	Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases and immunity disorders	6,285
E800-E807, E830-E949, E960-E999	Other causes of injury and poisoning	5,730
580-629	Diseases of the genitourinary system	4,968
200-208	Malignant neoplasm of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue	4,873
710-739	Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	4,398
460-478, 487, 500-519	Other diseases of the respiratory system	3,323
780-799	Symptoms, signs and ill-defined conditions	1,834

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Mrs. Edith Bird

Mr. Hoddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate the reasons why Mrs. Edith Bird of 14 Birkholme Drive, Meir Heath, Stoke on Trent, has not received her £10 Christmas bonus.

Mr. Lyell: The local office's records show that proper arrangements had been made for Mrs. Bird to receive the Christmas bonus during week commencing 1 December 1986. Subsequent investigations have failed to establish why she did not receive it at the proper time and a girocheque for £10 has now been sent to her.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths occurred in the United Kingdom as a result of food poisoning in each of the past five years for which figures are available; and how many of them are attributed to the presence of salmonella in poultry.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the number of deaths registered with an underlying cause as food poisoning, (excluding typhoid and paratyphoid fever which are caused by forms of salmonella bacteria, and toxic effect of noxious substances eaten as food), in the United Kingdom for each of the latest available five years.

Numbers of deaths with underlying cause as food as food poisoning, excluding typhoid and paratyphoid fever, and toxic substance take as food.

Person, all ages 1981-85 United Kingdom

Cause	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
ICD(9)[1]003 Other salmonella infections	63	74	54	62	53
ICD(9)[1]005 Other food poisoning (bacterial)	1	—	—	1	—

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

It is not possible from the registration of these deaths to identify specifically the source of the infection.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Contraventions)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of alleged breach by local authorities of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 are currently under investigation by his Department, how long each case has been under investigation; and when a decision will be made as to whether any of the cases currently under investigation constituted default by the local authority.

Mr. Major: Six cases of alleged breach of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 are currently outstanding. In three cases investigations have been under way for seven months, in one case for one year and four months, in one case for one year and five months,

and in one case for two years and seven months. Decisions as to whether any of the cases constitute default by local authority will be made as soon as possible.

RAWP Formula (Teaching Hospitals)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the purpose of review of the resources allocation working party formula with respect to teaching authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The review of the resource allocation working party formula was established to explore the scope for improving the way in which the formula estimates relative need for health services across the country. The allowance made in the formula for the additional service costs of teaching hospitals — the service increment for teaching — was among the issues identified for examination.

The NHS Management Board's initial Report on the Review concluded that there was scope for improvement in a number of aspects of the formula, but a further programme of analysis and research was required. This work is now under way, and includes an attempt to estimate all the elements in the additional costs of teaching hospitals in providing health services, including case mix and the service implications of teaching and research and development. Full details are set out in the report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Breast and Cervical Cancer

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much additional money has been made available to individual health authorities following his recent announcement concerning breast and cervical cancer screenings; and if he will give details by authority.

Mrs. Currie: Funds will be provided for a national breast cancer screening service to be established in England over the next three years on the basis of centres each serving a population of approximately half a million. It is for regional health authorities to decide in which districts the centres should be located and how the special allocations provided to establish them should be deployed. In 1987-88 each Region will be allocated £356,000 to cover the capital and revenue costs of establishing its first centre.

Leukaemia

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the total amount spent by his Department on *(a)* research into and *(b)* the treatment of leukaemia.

Mr. Newton: Since 1975 the Department has directly funded a rolling programme of research at the Childhood Cancer Research Group, Oxford which includes research into leukaemia; total expenditure from 1979-80 to 1986-87 was about £1·16 million (1986-87 prices). In addition three further studies have been funded since 1983 arising from the Report on the investigation of the possible increased incidence of Leukaemia in West Cumbria at a total cost of about £158,000. The main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

The Department of Health and Social Security has since 1986 allocated an additional £385,000 per annum to health authorities providing nursing support for the MRC's trials of intensive chemotherapy for childhood leukaemia.

National Health Service expenditure is not analysed in such a way as to enable spending on the treatment of leukaemia to be separately identified.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving the number of people on the in-patient waiting list in September 1986 as a percentage of the number of acute in-patient deaths-discharges in the latest year for which figures are available for each district health authority, also giving each district health authority's national ranking by this criterion;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving for each district health authority the percentage rise or fall in the hospital waiting lists between September 1982 and September 1986, also giving each district health authority's national ranking by this criterion;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving for each district health authority the percentage rise or fall in the hospital waiting lists between September 1985 and September 1986, also giving each district health authority's national ranking by this criterion.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

West Midlands RHA

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give by health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority the number of beds in 1978 and 1987;

(2) if he will list the number of patients given treatment annually since 1978 in each health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list by health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority those proposing reductions in non-emergency general medical and general surgical facilities;

(2) what has been the growth in capital allocations for each health authority district in the West Midlands regional health authority since 1978.

Mr. Newton: This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority who may be able to help him.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what he estimates to be the impact upon medical services in Shropshire if the proposal to close six wards at the Royal Shrewsbury hospital is implemented; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the district health authority areas within the West Midlands regional health authority in which the general surgical waiting list is expected by the relevant health authority to double over the next three years.

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend is aware, Shropshire health authority is considering a number of options to

enable it to stay broadly within its cash limits, taking account of the important service developments due to take place in the county during the next few years. In reaching a decision about its spending, Shropshire health authority will, I am sure, consider carefully the impact on services including waiting lists. It is currently discussing with the West Midlands regional health authority how it can best deploy its share of the waiting list fund announced by my right hon. Friend in November 1986.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will state the waiting lists in each health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority;

(2) if he will list by health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority the current waiting lists for treatment.

Mr. Newton: For the latest centrally available information I refer my hon. Friend to hospital in-patient waiting list, England at 30 September 1986, national, regional and district summaries, copies of which have been placed in the Library. For current figures he may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the annual expenditure of the West Midlands regional health authority since 1978.

Mr. Newton: Following are the total expenditure figures recorded in the annual financial accounts of the West Midlands regional health authority and those of district health authorities (area health authorities prior to 1982-83) within that region:

Hospital and community health services

	£ million
1978-79	460·7
1979-80	571·4
1980-81	742·0
1981-82	817·3
1982-83	868·6
1983-84	927·7
1984-85	1,005·8
1985-86	1,092·1

Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded although the figures for the years 1978-79 to 1984-85 include a small element representing family practitioner committees' administration expenses.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the members of the Shropshire health authority, the date of their appointment and projected termination date;

(2) if he will list the members of the West Midlands regional health authority, the date of their appointment and projected termination date.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information about members of Shropshire health authority is not held centrally. They are appointed by West Midlands regional health authority and the appropriate local authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to seek this information from the chairman of West Midlands regional health authority. The information requested about members of the regional health authority is as follows:

	Date first appointed	*Date appointment due to expire*
Mr. J. G. Ackers *(Chairman)*	1 August 1982	31 July 1990
Cllr. P. A. Beveridge	1 October 1980	30 September 1988
Ms. M. E. Bidewski	19 March 1987	30 September 1990
Mrs. M. A. Blackburne	13 June 1982	30 September 1988
Mrs. M. J. T. Bulley, OBE	1 October 1984	30 September 1988
Mr. G. Bulmyde	1 October 1986	30 September 1990
Cllr. D. G. Lloyd, MBE	1 October 1984	30 September 1988
Mr. J. Mortimer	3 June 1986	30 September 1988
Mr. A. D. Owen	1 October 1982	30 September 1990
Mr. A. J. Parkinson	1 October 1974	30 September 1988
Dr. R. Pomeroy	1 October 1984	30 September 1988
Prof. H. K. Shenton	1 October 1978	30 September 1988
Mr. S. B. Shuttleworth	1 October 1980	30 September 1988
Mr. B. Stones	1 October 1986	30 September 1990
Mr. A. G. Ward, *JP*	1 October 1974	30 September 1990
Mr. E. M. Worley, *JP*	1 October 1982	30 September 1990
Lady Jean Young, *JP*	1 October 1984	30 September 1988

There is currently one vacant place on West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the additional resources allocated to the West Midlands regional health authority for reduction of waiting lists; what steps he has taken to monitor its equitable distribution to the district health authorities within the region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: West Midlands regional health authority is to receive £2·88 million from the first year's allocation of the waiting list fund. Full details of the projects to be supported in all regions have been placed in the Library. The projects supported were submitted to the Department by the Region on behalf of its Districts and took account of the magnitude of the problems, the likely impact of the projects and the extent to which the districts were already making effective use of existing resources.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the growth in population to date, and projected population growth, for each health authority district within the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: The mid-year population estimates for 1981 and 1985 and the change between those years for each of the district health authorities within West Midlands regional health authority are shown in table 1. These data were published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in its Monitor reference PP1 86/2, a copy of which is available in the Library. The projected population change between 1985 and 1995 is shown in Table 2. The projections for 1995 were prepared by OPCS from a 1981 base and the data can only represent a view of the most likely way forward at the time of preparation.

Table 1
Mid year population estimates

Area	*Persons (thousands)* 1981	1985	*Change 1985-81* Per cent.
Bromsgrove and Redditch	133·9	142·7	6·4
Herefordshire	149·7	152·7	2·0
Kidderminster and District	99·8	101·1	1·3
Worcester and District	231·0	234·3	1·4
Shropshire	380·6	390·3	2·5
Mid Staffordshire	299·8	306·1	2·1
North Staffordshire	468·6	463·0	−1·2
South East Staffordshire	250·4	251·3	0·4
Rugby	87·5	85·4	−2·2
North Warwickshire	173·9	172·7	−0·7

Area	Persons (thousands) 1981	1985	Change 1981-85 Per cent.
South Warwickshire	215·8	221·4	2·6
Central Birmingham	185·4	179·9	−3·0
East Birmingham	203·8	201·7	−1·0
North Birmingham	167·6	163·4	−2·5
South Birmingham	255·2	249·1	−2·4
West Birmingham	208·8	213·4	2·2
Coventry	319·4	312·2	−2·3
Dudley	308·8	308·8	0·0
Sandwell	309·6	303·3	−2·1
Solihull	198·1	201·9	1·9
Walsall	267·7	262·9	−1·8
Wolverhampton	256·6	253·2	−1·3

Table 2
Mid year population estimates and 1985-based projections

DHA	Persons (thousands) 1985	1995	Change 1985-95 Per cent.
Bromsgrove and Redditch	162·7	177·3	9·0
Herefordshire	152·7	160·5	5·1
Kidderminster and District	101·1	104·3	3·2
Worcester and District	234·3	259·7	10·8
Shropshire	390·3	410·1	5·1
Mid Staffordshire	306·1	337·7	10·3
North Staffordshire	463·0	458·2	−1·0
South East Staffordshire	251·3	269·6	7·3
Rugby	85·6	92·0	7·5
North Warwickshire	172·7	184·7	6·9
South Warwickshire	221·4	226·6	2·3
Central Birmingham	179·9	168·6	−6·3
East Birmingham	201·7	190·9	−5·4
North Birmingham	163·4	168·2	2·9
South Birmingham	249·1	250·7	0·6
West Birmingham	213·4	212·5	−0·4
Coventry	312·2	307·5	−1·5
Dudley	308·8	307·9	2·4
Sandwell	303·3	303·1	−0·1
Solihull	201·9	196·9	−2·5
Walsall	262·9	260·2	−1·0
Wolverhampton	253·2	251·6	−0·6

Shropshire Health Authority

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the annual expenditure of Shropshire health authority from 1978.

Mr. Newton: Following is the information:

	Revenue Expenditure £ million	Capital Expenditure £ million
1978-79	29·1	1·0
1979-80	35·1	1·5
1980-81	44·5	1·5
1981-82	48·9	2·0
1982-83	52·3	3·7
1983-84	55·0	2·6
1984-85	58·7	3·2
1985-86	61·3	10·3

Notes:
1. The figures for revenue expenditure are those shown in the annual financial accounts of the health authority. Those for capital expenditure also include expenditure specifically on behalf of Shropshire shown in the annual accounts of the West Midlands Regional Health Authority.
2. Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded although the figures for the years 1978-79 to 1984-85 include a small element representing family practitioner committee administration expenses.

Hospital Radio Stations (Public Service Tapes)

Mr. Sheerby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the public service message tapes distributed by his Department to hospital radio stations were last reviewed; what plans he has for preparing new tapes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The last tape distributed by the Department to hospital radio stations was produced at the end of 1984 and withdrawn a year ago. Proposals for further tapes are being considered.

NHS (Private Medicine)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what scale of charges health authorities were expected up to 31 March 1987 to levy on hospital equipment borrowed from National Health Service hospitals; and what charges they were expected to levy for clerical or administrative work on private patients carried out by hospital staff.

Mrs. Currie: Administrative costs were included in the calculation of the National Health Services private patient charges which applied up to 31 March 1987. There is no set scale of charges for hospital equipment borrowed from the NHS. Where they exist such arrangements have been arrived at locally and often involved reciprocal exchanges of equipment.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the highest 10 payments of arrears of invalid care allowance paid by his Department in the last six months.

Mr. Major: The 10 largest payments of arrears of invalid care allowance made in the last six months were each for £2,717·75.

District Health Authorities (Patients)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will seek to amend the law so that district health authorities retain legal responsibility for the patients referred by them to non-National Health Service centres with whom they have contractual arrangements.

Mrs. Currie: No. A patient treated under contractual arrangements remains a National Health Service patient and the health authority retains responsibility for ensuring that the treatment needed is received.

NHS (Annual Report)

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much it cost his Department to produce the document, "The Health Service in England Annual Report 1985-86"; how many copies have been printed and what were their production costs; and what were the comparable figures for the reports of each of the two previous years.

Mrs. Currie: The printing costs and the number of copies printed for each of the three Health Service annual reports are set out in the table. The costs quoted included materials. The full printing costs, and distribution costs of sale copies, were borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office

with recovery in the usual way from the proceeds of sales. It would not be possible to calculate the Departmental costs of preparation, promotion and distribution without disproportionate cost.

	Annual Reports		
	1984	*1985*	*1985-86*
Cost of Printing	£9,300	£8,500	£15,000
Number of copies	3,830	4,000	4,200

Blood Donors

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what restrictions are being placed on blood donors who have visited Africa and for what reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Potential donors who have visited certain parts of Africa are asked not to donate blood until an appropriate time after their return to the United Kingdom. This precaution is taken to reduce the chance of transmitting certain tropical diseases such as malaria.

As a precaution against the transmission of the AIDS virus potential donors are asked not to give blood if they have visited certain parts of Africa and have also had sex with men or women living there.

Social Security (Expenditure)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown of the rise in real expenditure on social security between 1978-79 and 1986-87 in the same form as the table in the Government's "Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90" II, Cm. 56, page 248, paragraph 39.

Mr. Major: Over the period 1978-79 to 1986-87 the social security programme increased by £12½ billion (at 1986-87 prices) or by 39 per cent. in real terms. The main reasons for the increase were:

(i) £4¾ billion due to real increases in the average amounts of benefit paid (whether due to changes in the basic rate of benefit or other factors);
(ii) £2 billion due to increased numbers of retirement pensioners;
(iii) £1¾ billion due to increased numbers receiving disability benefits;
(iv) £4¼ billion due to increased numbers of unemployed people receiving benefit;
(v) £1 billion due to increased numbers of single parents receiving benefit;
(vi) £¼ billion reflecting the increased costs of administering a larger number of claims for benefits;

offset by reductions of:

(vii) £1½ billion reflecting the introduction of statutory sick pay and a decrease in the incidence of short term sickness;
(viii) £¼ billion from reductions in the numbers of widows and children.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table which provides the same information on supplementary benefit single payments for the same time period for each year since 1979 as that provided in his reply of 17 March to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) *Official Report*, columns *479-80*.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Abortions

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of legal abortions performed in England and Wales from 1981 to 1986 *(a)* between 13 and 16 weeks gestation inclusive and *(b)* by main procedure cross tabulated by category of premises.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is published in "Abortion Statistics: series AB" (1981-1985) nos. 8-12, *(a)* Table 9, *(b)* for residents only Table 14. Copies of these volumes may be found in the Library.

It should be noted that the correct figures of table 9 of the 1981 volume can be found in the 1982 volume.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of legal abortions performed in England and Wales on women resident in each health and social services board area in Northern Ireland in 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Social Workers

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers of qualified social workers employed by local authority social services departments and health authorities in England in 1959, 1969, and in each year between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: Information on the number of qualified social workers is not collected centrally. Numbers of field social workers, qualified and unqualified, employed by local authority social services departments in England, expressed as whole-time equivalents, in each year between 1979 and 1985 (the latest year for which figures are available) are given in the table. The figures include hospital based social workers. Social services departments did not come into existence until 1 April 1971 and comparable figures for 1959 and 1969 are not available. From a sample survey completed in 1986 by the local government training board it is estimated that about 85 per cent. of all field social workers in Great Britain hold a qualification approved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work.

Field social workers of social services departments expressed as whole-time equivalents, 1979-85, England

As at 30 September	*Thousands*
1979	22·7
1980	23·0
1981	23·0
1982	23·0
1983	23·7
1984	24·3
1985[1]	24·8

[1] Provisional

Social Services Departments

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the budget expenditure of local authority social services departments in 1959, 1969 and in each year between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: Gross current expenditure by English local authority social services departments for each of the

years 1978-79 to 1986-87 is shown in the table at cash and at 1986-87 prices. Revaluation to 1986-87 prices has been carried out by reference to the Gross Domestic Product deflator. Social services departments as such did not exist prior to 1 April 1971 so it is not possible to give comparable expenditure figures for years before then.

Gross current expenditure (£ million)

	Cash	*1986-87 prices*
1978-79	1,263	2,459
1979-80	1,537	2,561
1980-81	1,893	2,658
1981-82	2,098	2,683
1982-83	2,304	2,747
1983-84	2,486	2,838
1984-85	2,638	2,886
1985-86[1]	2,795	2,879
1986-87[2]	3,131	3,131

[1] Provisional.
[2] Estimate based on local authority budgets.

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the total staff numbers of local authority social services departments in 1959, 1969, and in each year between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: The total numbers of staff of local authority social services departments, expressed as whole-time equivalents, in each year between 1979 and 1985 (the latest year for which figures are available) are given in the table. Social services departments did not come into existence until 1 April 1971 and comparable figures for 1959 and 1969 are not available.

Staff of social services departments, expressed as whole-time equivalents 1979-85, England

As at 30 September	*Thousands*[1]
1979	193·6
1980	199·0
1981	201·0
1982	203·4
1983	210·0
1984	212·9
1985[2]	217·0

[1] Some figures include estimates from information for earlier years.
[2] Provisional.

Newham General Hospital

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many times, and on what dates, in the past six months the accident and emergency department at Newham general hospital has been partially or entirely closed; and what were the reasons given in each case.

Mrs. Currie: This is essentially a local matter and the hon. Member may care to approach the chairman of the Newham health authority.

Death Grant

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many death grant payments were made in the London borough of Southwark in each of the last three years; and how many of those who received the payments will be eligible for the new means tested death grant;

(2) what information he has as to what percentage of the residents of the London borough of Southwark will be eligible for the new means tested death grant.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Health Authorities (Beds)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request health authorities to cease the practice of double use of beds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The way in which health authorities plan the use of their beds is a matter for them, but they must ensure that intensive use of beds does not adversely affect the quality of care provided for the patients concerned.

Health Authorities (Vacancies)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of unfilled vacancies in nursing in each of the four London regional health authorities and the number of such vacancies in each district of the North East Thames regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Accident and Emergency Units (London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the names of those accident and emergency units in each of the four London health regions that were closed for any parts of March 1987 together with the period or periods of closure and the respective reasons.

Mrs. Currie: Provision of accident and emergency services is a matter for the relevant health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the four Thames regional health authorities for information on the local position in their regions during March 1987.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to make any changes in the level of funding for kidney and other transplants.

Mrs. Currie: Funding levels for kidney transplantation are for health authorities to determine within their overall cash allocations. The protected funding in 1986-87 for heart and liver transplantation, which falls within the supra-regional services arrangements, was £5·023 million. An additional £2·315 million, a real term increase in total revenue funding of 44 per cent., has been allocated to these services in 1987-88.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy concerning the availability of attendance allowance for people using self-care renal dialysis units in hospital.

Mr. Major: I am pleased to announce that we intend to make attendance allowance available to people using self-care dialysis units on hospital sites on the same basis as is available to those who dialyse at home.

At present there are only a small number of such self-care units, in hospitals in the Wessex Region, where they are perceived to be an acceptable and economical way of enabling people with kidney failure to dialyse just as they would in their own homes, with assistance from another person who is not employed by the hospital. At present these people are denied attendance allowance.

We think it is wrong that the attendance allowance regulations should inhibit what some doctors believe to be a helpful extension in the availability of renal dialysis, unforeseen when the regulations were drafted. We shall therefore bring forward an amendment to the regulations following formal consultation with the Attendance Allowance Board.

Basildon Hospital

Mr. Anness asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the funding of Basildon hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the North East Thames regional health authority has agreed to provide £2·1 million commencing in 1987-88 for the centralisation of maternity, gynaecology, and neo-natal inpatient services at Basildon hospital.

The funding of services at Basildon hospital is a matter for Basildon and Thurrock health authority. I was pleased to meet recently a delegation from the authority, led by my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor), informing me of its plans to improve services in Basildon and Thurrock. My hon. Friend may wish to write to that authority about any other matter concerning the services provided there.

Novopen

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make the disposable needle used in Novopen available free for diabetics on prescription through general practitioners.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans to do so at the present time. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 26 March at column *258*.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will place in the Library tables showing total revenue expenditure and capital expenditure in each health district from 1982-83 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* 1982-83 prices, using the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* at 1982-83 prices, using the National Health Service pay and prices/National Health Service capital deflator;

(2) whether he will place in the Library tables showing total revenue expenditure and capital expenditure in each National Health Service region in each year from 1974-75 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* at 1974-75 prices using gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* at 1974-75 prices using National Health Service pay and prices/National Health Service capital deflator.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *139*]: Tables showing regional health authority expenditure for the years 1974-75 to 1984-85 and district health authority expenditure for the years 1982-83 to 1984-85 were placed in the Library as stated in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member on 13 January 1986 at column *507*. The cash figures in these tables were adjusted to 1983-84 prices using the gross domestic product deflator and the regional figures were also adjusted to a 1983-84 base by reference to centrally assessed movements in NHS pay and prices for revenue and in construction prices for capital. The cost of recalculating the regional figures to a 1974-75 base and the district figures to a 1982-83 base would be disproportionate but tables have now been placed in the Library showing regional and district figures for 1985-86 in the same form as those given previously.

As stated in my predecessor's reply, it is inappropriate to revalue district health authority expenditure by reference to centrally assessed movements in NHS pay and prices, because the composition of that expenditure can differ substantially from the national average. Capital expenditure on major schemes is charged to regional health authority accounts and to that extent comparisons cannot usefully be drawn between district health authority capital expenditure figures.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to answer the questions about National Health Service expenditure to which a holding reply was given on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *139*.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member today.

Energy Saving

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what arrangements he has made to ensure his Freephone DHSS service can promote the work of local neighbourhood energy action projects by way of local referrals;

(2) what plans he has to ensure that those claiming severe weather payments can also claim single payments for draughtproofing where the work can be done by local neighbourhood energy action groups.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1987, c. *624-25*]: People who ring the Department's freephone service are informed of the availability of single payments for draughtproofing materials where appropriate. In addition two leaflets (SB16 and SB17) refer to the availability of such single payments. One of these, entitled "Help with Heating Costs" specifically mentions the work of voluntary organisations in this area.

Whilst there are at present no special arrangements to promote the work of local neighbourhood energy action groups, officials are, in consultation with national charities looking at what might be done in this respect.

GPs (Retirement Payments)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing what payments a general practitioner in the National Health Service receives on retirement, assuming that his length of service was 30 and 40 years, respectively, and that he earned average general practitioner's earnings.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 March 1987, c. *480-81*]: The superannuation benefits of general medical practitioners are assessed as a proportion of total superannuable earnings throughout their careers. The earnings for each financial year are uprated by percentages

reflecting the pay increases agreed following the recommendations of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration over the years of the practitioner's service. This "dynamising" process converts the practitioner's career remuneration to a monetary value equivalent to remuneration levels current at the end of his or her service. The retirement benefits payable are a pension, assessed as 1·4 per cent. of the practitioner's dynamised career earnings, and a tax free lump sum of up to three times the pension.

The following table shows the retirement benefits of a married male practitioner based upon the intended average net income recommended by the review body each year since 1971-72, and equivalent figures back to 1948. Since no practitioner has yet served 40 years in the National Health Service scheme, a maximum of 39 years has been used. Column A shows the benefits which would accrue to a practitioner who opted to purchase credit for his service prior to 24 March 1972. Colum B represents a practitioner who did not so opt.

	A		*B*	
	With 30 years' service £	*With 39 years' service* £	*With 30 years' service* £	*With 39 years' service* £
Annual pension	10,343	13,453	10,343	13,453
Lump sum retiring allowance	31,029	40,359	20,677	23,787

Amnesia

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will encourage local authority social service departments to provide funds for the rehabilitation of sufferers from severe amnesia;

(2) whether any residential accommodation is provided by the National Health Service for those suffering from severe amnesia;

(3) if he will request the National Health Service regions to assess the adequacy of their provision for those suffering from severe amnesia; and if he will encourage the establishment of regional centres;

(4) what information he has on *(a)* the number of cases of severe amnesia that occur annually and *(b)* the National Health Service provision for such cases.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 April 1987, c. *619*]: Severe amnesia can be a symptom of a range of medical conditions, including head injury and Alzheimer's disease. The National Health Service organises its services to treat medical conditions rather than specific symptoms. There is, therefore, no special provision, nor have we any plans to provide any, for treating severe amnesia or accommodating patients with this condition separately. Patients may be treated in a number of settings such as neurological, mental illness or geriatric units. Similar considerations apply to the provision of social services to people suffering from severe amnesia by local authorities. We do not collect statistics from either health or local authorities on severe amnesia.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tourist Board

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grant aid and other assistance the Northern Ireland Tourist Board receives from public funds; and what are the subventions comparable with those made to the tourist boards in Great Britain.

Mr. Viggers: In the financial year 1986-87 the Northern Ireland Tourist Board received grant-in-aid of £2·65 million from the Department of Economic Development. I understand that in the same year the following provision out of public funds was made to the other Tourist Boards in the United Kingdom.

	Grant-in-Aid £ million	*Development of Tourism Act 1969* £ million	*Total* £ million
English Tourist Board	10·76	9·5	20·26
Scottish Tourist Board	6·25	2·83	9·08
Welsh Tourist Board	5·35	2·54	7·89

In comparing these figures it should be noted that in Northern Ireland schemes for grant aid to the private sector for the provision of approved tourist accommodation and to the public sector for the provision of approved tourist amenities are administered directly by the Department of Economic Development, whereas in the rest of the United Kingdom the tourist boards administer such schemes under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. The amount spent by the Department of Economic Development on such schemes in 1986-87 was £2·99 million.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether there has been any consideration given to amending the five-year residence requirement for supplementary benefit in the light of judgments concerning access to state-provided assistance for citizens of European Community member states.

Mr. Needham: The question is currently being considered.

Mr. Chan Hok Cheung

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary about how many times Mr. Chan Hok Cheung has been interviewed by Royal Ulster Constabulary officers in connection with the inquiry pending which an officer was suspended on 18 March; and for what further assistance Mr. Chan is required by the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Scott: The extent, direction and control of the investigation and any subsequent proceedings is a matter for the Chief constable and the Director of Public Prosecutions. However, I understand that Mr. Chan has been interviewed by officers from the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the criteria for evaluating forecasts of the price of coal and the price of lignite for the next 30 years, in considering the construction of a new power station in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: In evaluating forecasts of the price of coal and lignite my officials will be seeking the least cost source of secure supply taking due account of the forecast of variations in that cost. The forecast of the price of coal will be related to the price of internationally traded coal. The forecast of prices of lignite will be based on terms of supply offered by prospective miners.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current price of lignite and the terms of supply which are curreatly being offered in his discussions with British Petroleum Coal.

Mr. Viggers: No. While the Department of Economic Development has been kept informed of negotiations on price and terms of supply between BP Coal Limited and NIE and the groups putting forward proposals to building a lignite-fired power station, these negotiations are commercially confidential.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state in the *Official Report* the cost to public funds to date of examining *(a)* coal or dual oil/coal-fired plant at Kilroot, *(b)* interconnection with Scotland, and *(c)* lignite-fired power station options for new generating capacity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The various future generation proposals were submitted to the Department of Economic Development on 19 November 1987. Since that time the cost to public funds of evaluating these options has amounted to approximately £305,000.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he or any of his Ministers have to visit power stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: None at present.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he, or any of his Ministers, visited the lignite excavation site at Crumlin, Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Visits were made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Sir A. Butler), Minister of State, on 22 August 1984, and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson), Minister of State, on 6 November 1984.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings, and on what dates, have been held during the last 12 months with British Petroleum Coal to discuss the price and terms of supply of lignite to power stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Officials have held 12 meetings with BP Coal Ltd. on the following dates when the price and terms of supply of lignite to a power station were among the matters discussed.

30 May 1986
3 July 1986
22 August 1986
23 September 1986
21 October 1986
30 October 1986
12 December 1986
6 February 1987
23 February 1987
16 March 1987
26 March 1987
30 March 1987

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings, and on what dates, have been held during the last 12 months with Northern Ireland Electricity to discuss future generating capacity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Nine, on the following dates:

8 April 1986
14 May 1986
17 June 1986
6 August 1986
20 August 1986
29 October 1986
5 November 1986
4 February 1987
26 March 1987

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings, and on what dates, have been held during the last 12 months with the Antrim Power Company to discuss future generating capacity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: There have been 17, on the following dates:

19 May 1986
12 June 1986
26 June 1986
28 August 1986
12 September 1986
3 October 1986
14 October 1986
28 October 1986
26 November 1986
13 January 1987
14 January 1987
15 January 1987
16 January 1987
6 February 1987
16 March 1987
19 March 1987
20 March 1987

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings, and on what dates, have been held during the last 12 months with British Coal to discuss the price and terms of supply of coal to power stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The price and terms of supply of coal to power stations are matters for which Northern Ireland Electricity has responsibility and upon which they directly negotiate with British Coal. However, officials of the Department of Economic Development have had one meeting, on 24 February 1987, with British Coal to seek their views on the long-term forecast price of coal and to discuss their future contractual arrangements with Northern Ireland Electricity.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost to public funds of the construction of a lignite-fuelled power station, the completion of a dual-fired Kilroot phase II, the construction of a new coal fired power station, the construction of an interconnector with Scotland and the reintroduction of the interconnector with the Irish Republic, respectively.

Mr. Viggers: Northern Ireland Electricity has submitted estimated costs for; the construction of a lignite-fuelled power station, the completion of a dual-fired Kilroot phase II and the construction of an interconnector with Scotland. Two private sector consortia have also submitted proposals for the construction of a lignite-fuelled power station. Officials are now assessing the estimates received for these options and it would be

improper to disclose the cost involved while this assessment is continuing. A proposal for a new coal-fired power station has not been received and therefore no cost estimate is available. The Department of Economic Development does not have a current estimate of the cost of re-establishing the interconnector with the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the trades unions on the construction of a lignite-fuelled power station in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: I have not as yet had any specific discussions with trade union representatives on this subject but plan to meet representatives from the Federation of Union Supplying Electricity and the Electrical Power Engineers Association in the near future.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* which power stations, and on what dates, he has visited in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: I visited the Kilroot power station on 18 March 1987.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the likely environmental impact of the construction of a lignite-fuelled power station in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Officials in the Department of Economic Development and the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) have discussed the environmental implications of a lignite-fired station. However, a full assessment of the likely environmental impact of such a station would depend upon is location and detailed plans.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to ensure the development and maintenance of electricity generation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Northern Ireland Electricity has advised the Department of Economic Development that additional generating capacity will be required by the mid-1990s. The Department is currently evaluating a number of future generation options and a decision will be taken on these as soon as possible to ensure the development and maintenance of electricity generation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future generation of electricity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The then Secretary of State made a statement on this subject on 22 May 1985 at columns *418-19*. The Department of Ecomomic Development is currently evaluating a number of future generation options and no decision has yet been taken on future generation strategy in Northern Ireland.

Lignite

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what studies have been carried out into the amount of reserves of lignite in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Under a prospecting licence granted by the Department of Economic Development originally in 1978 a subsidiary of Burnett & Hallamshire plc established that there were significant reserves of lignite near Crumlin. In 1983, the Department commissioned a programme of shallow drilling and discovered further substantial reserves of lignite in East Tyrone, and around Ballymoney. Exploration work, including further drilling, to determine the size of these reserves has been carried out under licence during 1986 by BP Coal Ltd Meekatharra Minerals (NI) Ltd and subsidiary companies of Anglo United.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has of the total cost to date of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's legal actions before *(a)* industrial tribunals in Northern Ireland and *(b)* the European Court in respect of the actions of those full-time and part-time reserve women police officers who received compensatory awards for discrimination; and whether any further liability to public funds may be expected to arise.

Mr. Scott: The cost of the compensation agreed to date has been £236,920. Further claims have been made and if these are ruled admissible by the president of the industrial tribunal they may result in an increase to this figure. I have nothing to add on legal costs to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 2 April at column *612*.

Housing Executive

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the allocation of funds to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for capital works to existing dwellings as at 1 April 1986;

(2) what was the outturn figure for capital works carried out to existing dwellings owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as at 31 March 1987;

(3) what was the funding allocation to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for capital works to existing dwellings in the south region as at 1 April 1986;

(4) what was the outturn figure for capital works to existing dwellings in the south region of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as at 31 March 1986;

(5) if the normal accounting procedures of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive were implemented in relation to a payment from the Masonic Housing Associaton in respect of a housing development in Donaghadee; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what was the approved budget of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nursery at Dundonald between 1983 and 1985;

(7) how great was the loss to public funds deriving from overspending of the approved budget during 1983 to 1985 at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nursery at Dundonald;

(8) what was the period of the delay in a payment from the Masonic Housing Association to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for a housing development in Donaghadee established by a local government audit; and if he will make a statement;

(9) what increased funding was requested by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for capital expenditure to existing dwellings at the last autumn review; and what increase was allocated;

(10) what increased funding was requested by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the south region at the last autumn review; and what increase was allocated;

(11) by how much the approved budget of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nursery at Dundonald for 1983 to 1985 was exceeded.

Mr. Needham: These are matters for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available; I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Special Category Status

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has made to the order of the High Court in Belfast in December 1986 to provide information relating to the introduction and withdrawal of special category status.

Mr. Scott: The order was made in connection with an application brought by a prisoner for judicial review of a prison adjudication. The action is in its preliminary stages and has not yet come to trial; it would not therefore be appropriate for me to comment further.

Farmers

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the approximate number of Northern Ireland farmers and the value of monetary compensation amounts payments owed them in connection with cattle purchases in the Irish Republic; for how long these payments have been outstanding; what representations have been made to the Irish authorities; with what result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *647*]: Information from the authorities in the Republic of Ireland is that at the end of February around £1 million was outstanding in relation to MCA payments on cattle imported from the Republic of Ireland. It is understood that almost 200 Northern Ireland importers are affected. A number of these payments have been outstanding for six months. Meetings have been held between United Kingdom officials and those of the Irish Department of Agriculture as a result of which urgent action is being taken by the latter to clear the outstanding payments.

It is hoped that claimants will be paid more promptly in future.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 7 April 1987

ENVIRONMENT

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the houses and flats built on land owned by the London Docklands Development Corporation which were sold between July and December 1986 were sold to persons on the housing waiting list of the London boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 1 April 1987, at column 553.

Commercial and Industrial Premises (Revaluation)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to lay the order regarding the revaluation of commercial and industrial premises in England.

Dr. Boyson: My right hon. Friend today laid the two orders needed to provide for a revaluation of non-domestic properties in England and Wales, to take effect in 1990. This will be the first such revaluation since 1973. It will generally assist businesses in those areas and sectors of the economy which have been most affected by the recession. They have been carrying an unfair share of the rates burden in recent years.

The revaluation is timed to coincide with the introduction of the proposed uniform non-domestic rate poundage. This will remove the present distortions in non-domestic rates. The uniform rate will then increase no faster than the rate of inflation, giving businesses the benefit of stable and predictable rate burdens.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Ridley: My Department plans to spend £51·4 million on research and development for 1987-88. All the Department's research and development is selected in accordance with the customer-contractor principle, as defined by Lord Rothschild in his report to the Government in 1971, with the exception of the "discretionary" programme of the director of the Building Research Establishment.

The areas of research covered by the Department's research programme are; environmental protection, water, countryside, planning, local government, housing and building and construction.

Council House Sales

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of council houses *(a)* sold and *(b)* built in Fenland district council and East Cambridgeshire district council in the last five years.

Mr. Tracey: The reported sales of dwellings by the authorities and completions of dwellings for the authorities appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics", which are available in the Library.

Sales of Council Dwellings

Financial years	*issue number*
1981-82	63
1982-83	67
1983-84	75
1984-85 and 1985-86	79

Completions of New Dwellings

Calendar years	*issue number*
1981, 1982, 1983	73
1984	77
1985	78

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:
Friday 13 March—Swindon
Wednesday 18 March—Cleveland
Friday 20 March—Newton Abbot

Agricultural Land (Development)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what reply he has made to the request by the National Association of Local Councils to grant an extension of time for the consideration of his Department's circular on development involving agricultural land.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall send my hon. Friend a copy of my reply to the National Association of Local Councils' request. There has been very full public discussion of the matter since the draft circular was published on 9 February and I see no reason to extend the usual two-month consultation period.

Redundant Hospital Sites

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy for the future use of redundant hospital sites in the green belt.

Mr. Ridley: In the next few years many older hospitals, especially those for the mentally ill or mentally handicapped, will no longer be needed. A number of these hospitals are located in the green belts. The Government have been considering how planning for the future of these redundant hospitals can best be handled having regard to green belt policy as set out in DOE circular 14/84.

Local planning authorities are responsible for considering the future of individual sites. When it is known that particular sites are likely to become redundant, it will often be appropriate to bring forward policies or proposals

for the future use of those sites when considering alterations to structure or local plans. Some planning authorities are already doing this. Because there are a number of sites in several areas my Department has prepared guidelines to assist local planning authorities in preparing policies for the sites and in dealing with any planning applications relating to them. I and my inspectors will have regard to the guidelines when dealing with any planning appeals or structure plan alterations which come to me for decision.

Many of the sites share common characteristics. The original hospitals are often large groups of buildings and were typically built between 50 and 150 years ago. Many ancillary buildings for different purposes have been added since. The hospitals are often on the edges of built-up areas and stand in large open grounds.

In planning for the future of these buildings and their sites the aim should be to use them for purposes compatible with the green belt as set out in circular 14/84, which can include institutional uses. The size, layout and form of the buildings may, however, make them unsuitable for such purposes. In such cases it will be necessary to consider whether, in the terms of the green belt circular, "very special circumstances" exist that would warrant the change of use of the buildings or the construction of new buildings.

In some cases it may be possible to convert the existing buildings for housing or other uses, perhaps with some demolition of ancillary buildings. But if that is not a practical solution the future of the buildings and the site, and the possibility of redevelopment, will need to be carefully considered. Putting the sites to beneficial use will be preferable to allowing the buildings to remain empty and the site to become derelict. Those are special circumstances that may warrant a change of use or new development. Planning permission will be required if there is to be a change of use of the existing buildings or if new buildings are to be put up.

Whatever the future use of the site it should be planned with careful regard to its contribution to the green belt and to the amenity of the area — for example, landscaped grounds and mature trees should be preserved and maintained and opportunities should be sought to open up parts of the site to public access.

Guidelines for the future use of redundant hospital sites in the Green Belt

i. Re-use of the existing buildings for purposes within the accepted green belt categories (as set out in DOE circular 14/84) is the preferred option, especially where the buildings are of architectural and historical importance. There may in particular be scope for re-use by institutions.

ii. However, if there is little or no prospect of viable re-use within those categories, other uses are preferable to allowing the buildings to remain empty or grossly underoccupied. The aim should be to achieve redevelopment for other suitable uses by conversion of the existing buildings.

iii. If the existing buildings, or part of them, are unsuitable for conversion, redevelopment should not normally occupy a larger area of the site nor exceed the height of the existing buildings. The location of the new buildings should be decided having regard to the main features of the landscape and the need to integrate the new development with its surroundings (for example it may be more appropriate to site new development closer to existing developent).

iv. The amenity value of the site should be retained or enhanced where practical by preserving mature trees and keeping or laying out landscaped areas, and if possible opening them to public access with adequate provision for their maintenance.

v. Redevelopment should not normally involve additional expenditure by the public sector on the provision of infrastructure (for example on roads and sewerage) nor should it overload local facilities such as schools and health care facilities.

vi. Local planning authorities should where appropriate include policies on these lines in their development plans.

Cash Limits

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's 1986-87 cash limits.

Mr. John Patten: The cash limit for local authorities' capital expenditure (DOE/LA1) has been increased by £0·5 million from £2,368·12 million to £2,368·62 million. This increase follows a transfer from the Department of Energy towards additional costs of the homes insulation scheme and a corresponding reduction in the cash limit for Class VI, Vote 2.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what alterations to the November 1985 building regulations have been made following the recommendations contained in paragraph 3.90 of the final report of Mr. Justice Popplewell into safety at sports grounds;

(2) what guidance has been issued to local authorities, sporting bodies and other interested organisations regarding the criteria applied by the November 1985 building regulations to the construction of sports stands, including the materials which may be used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *635*]: The Building Regulations 1985 require buildings (which include covered sports stands) to be built so that the structure adequately resists the spread of fire and maintains its stability in fire for a reasonable period.

The approved documents supporting the regulations give guidance on the measures that should be taken to achieve adequate fire resistance. Additional guidance is being incorporated into the approved documents as part of the current review of the technical requirements of the regulations, particularly to improve precautions in new single storey stands.

Also the "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds" (the green guide) issued by the Home Office in October 1986 advises that new stands should incorporate from the start comprehensive measures for safety including adequate structural resistance to fire, fire resisting separation from any spaces below or communicating with the stand, escape routes which are planned to keep people well clear of the smokey gases produced by a fire, a roof geometry which should restrict smoke and flame travel along the underside of the roof and internal finishes which have low flammability. In particular, the guide gives advice on the fire risk associated with the existence of voids under the seating in stands which should be excluded if practicable, or completely sealed off to stop litter accumulating in them.

Copies of the guide were sent to local authorities, independent fire authorities, certified sports grounds and all major sporting organisations; and are available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

TRANSPORT

Road Accidents

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the numbers of people killed in motor car accidents in each of the last five years; and if he will divide these figures according to whether the person killed was *(a)* a driver, *(b)* a passenger or *(c)* a pedestrian.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information for the years 1975 to 1985 is given in table 5 of "Road Accidents Great Britain (the Casualty Report) 1985." A copy is in the Library. Results for 1986 will not be available before May 1987.

Fatalities in car accidents

	Car drivers	*Car passengers*	*Pedestrians*
1985	1,253	808	1,258
1984	1,237	942	1,310
1983	1,198	821	1,362
1982	1,472	971	1,217
1981	1,346	941	1,265
1980	1,339	939	1,272
1979	1,479	950	1,374
1978	1,525	1,044	1,600
1977	1,429	1,012	1,492
1976	1,441	1,079	1,561
1975	1,417	1,027	1,550

Thames Crossing

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Transport what study he has given to plans for a new vehicular crossing of the Thames in London between Chelsea and Putney.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have no such plans. Consultants carrying out the west London assessment study will be considering a wide range of possible options for dealing with problems in the area, which could include a new crossing, when they move on to stage 2 of the study later this year.

North Circular Road

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to announce the result of the public inquiry completed in 1985 on the proposed widening of the north circular road between Popes Lane and the A40.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport are still considering the inspector's report. I cannot yet say when a decision will be announced.

Roade (Bypass)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had any proposal from Northamptonshire county council for the construction of a bypass to Roade.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A proposed bypass to Roade is included in Northamptonshire's 1987-88 transport policies and programme submission to the Department for construction after 1992.

Light Dues

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total revenue received from light dues on shipping in the United Kingdom, and the cost to his Department of collection, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The revenue in 1985-86 was £41,749,852. The costs of collection are not met by my Department but by the general lighthouse fund: in 1985-86 these costs were £203,874.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Moore: My Department plans to spend £29·803 million gross (£27·537 million net) on research and development in 1987-88. The main areas of research are highways, road and marine safety, land transport, prevention of marine pollution, and work on repayment for the Overseas Development Administration of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. All research undertaken by my Department is commissioned under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Moore: I made the following official visits in the United Kingdom during March 1987:

2 March
Launch of Eurotunnel publicity train at Paddington station, London.

3 March
Visit to British Caledonian at Gatwick airport.

4 March
Launch of new Highway Code at Coteford school, Pinner.

13 March
Visit to Kings Lynn to open new BR travel centre and tour Kings Lynn port.

18 March
Opening of M5/M42 southern extension, Bromsgrove (Hertfordshire).

20 March
Visit to Ashford, Kent at invitation of borough council to see Channel tunnel related development plans and mock-up of the Eurotunnel car shuttle train.

27 March
Visit to Sussex police headquarters at Lewes, to see traffic management systems and enforcement in operation.

Coach Terminals (London)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) 17 November, *Official Report*, columns 20-21, if he will make a further statement about the future of London coach terminals.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 17 November I announced that I was considering what could be an appropriate form of inquiry to enable the arguments for a single hub terminal compared with the merits of a number of smaller terminals to be properly aired in public. I understand that London Regional Transport is proposing to submit a planning application for a new coach terminal, to be developed at Paddington, in accordance with the report of its own transportation consultants.

I have consulted my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is satisfied that the planning aspects of any proposed coach terminal development will involve issues of more than local importance, and that he should himself deal with any application made in this respect by LRT. He will therefore shortly issue a direction under section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to the Westminster city council, requiring the council to refer any such application to him. A public local inquiry will be held with appropriately wide terms of reference, which will allow the consideration of both single and multi-site solutions, at which interested persons may attend and give their views.

The Government would wish to see the maximum possible private sector involvement in the financing and operation of any new coach terminal, or terminals, in London. No decision has yet been taken on the provision of public sector finance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Servants

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing those black and Asian civil servants who hold the rank of executive officer and above *(a)* in the immigration services and *(b)* in the remainder of his Department.

Mr. Hurd: The information available relates to those members of the staff of the Department who responded to the recent surveys of ethnic origins. Of those respondents, in the immigration service grades (all of which are equivalent to executive officer or above) six were black and 15 were of Asian origin. Outside the immigration service grades, the equivalent figures from these voluntary responses for staff at the rank of executive officer or above were 26 black and 42 Asian.

Police Stations (Merseyside)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the location of manned police stations *(a)* closed down and *(b)* opened, on Merseyside, since 1970.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable that, since 1974 when the Merseyside police was formed, one new manned police station, at Copy lane, Bootle, has been opened. No police stations have been closed except for the purpose of replacement by a new station.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* how many establishments are registered for the purposes of experiments of a non-medical nature using animals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are some 450 establishments at which licensed experimentation involving animals is carried out. Our records do not distinguish between establishments on the basis of the nature of the experimental work they carry out.

Rescue Services (Working Group)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to the written answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, columns *122-25*, if he will list the titles and grades of the Home Office representatives on the working group considering guidance on rescue services;

(2) if he will list the titles and employing authorities of the local authority representatives on the working group considering guidance on rescue services;

(3) if he will make a statement on the basis for choosing representatives to the working group considering guidance on rescue services from both the Home Office and local authorities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Membership of the working group comprises: the Co-ordinator of Volunteer Effort in Civil Defence (grade 5) (Chairman); the Home Office Civil Defence Adviser (grade 7); representatives at grade 7 and senior executive officer level from the Fire and Emergency Planning Department, a Regional Fire Adviser; a grade 1 Inspector of Fire Services; and local authority representatives comprising one nominee each from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the County Emergency Planning Officers' Society and the Association of Civil Defence and Emergency Planning Officers. Members of the working group represent Home Office policy interests, and operational interests concerned with emergency planning.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Hurd: It is estimated that £16·4 million will be spent on research and development in 1987-88. The main areas of research to which the Rothschild principles apply are police services, fire prevention, civil defence, prisons, forensic science, telecommunications, criminal justice, community services, immigration and nationality, race relations and equal opportunities. Further details are given in the "Annual Review of Government Funded R & D", copies of which are in the Library.

Citizenship

Mr. Fairbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce a concessionary rate for those people above retirement age who are seeking to register for British citizenship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No: such a concession would lead to the cost of the service being spread over fewer applicants and so to an increase in the fee.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Hurd: The financial management initiative forms part of the Government's continuing effort to improve the management of resources and obtain value for public money, and its effects are increasingly indistinguishable within those wider improvements. While much remains to be done, I believe that there has been a significant change of attitude and management style within the Home Office, with much greater attention being paid to the costing of policies and functions and the setting of clear objectives and targets.

Among the developments designed to strengthen accountable management in the Home Office in recent years have been: the establishment of the annual performance review, in which line managers and senior officials assess performance against previously declared objectives, and identify fresh objectives for the year ahead; the establishment of cost and responsibility centres around the office, to improve accountability in resource allocation; the provision of increased training in financial management; improved information about costs and output to provide a better basis for management and control; progress towards the introduction of clearer objectives and performance indicators in relation to local authority services and the greater use of accountants and other specialists.

The head of the immigration and nationality department, and all prison regional directors and governors, have been allocated individual budgetary responsibility, and work is in hand to extend this principle to other parts of the Home Office. Some of these improvements are reflected in the targets and performance measures in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56) and the evidence which the permanent secretary gave to the Public Expenditure Committee on 17 December 1986. Examples of better value for money in 1986-87 have been: the targets which were set and met for containing, and slightly reducing, in real terms the cost per inmate of operating prisons, and for reducing prison industry losses by over 20 per cent.; the targets for improvement in the procurement field which are forecast to result in savings of the order of £10 million; and the civilianisation of over 680 posts in police forces, permitting more effective deployment of police officers.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Hurd: I made the following official visits during March:

March 4
NUJ Conference on the future of broadcasting.
Association of Chief Police Officers/International Police Exhibition and Conference launch.

March 5
Birmingham Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

March 11
Gaming Board.

March 13
Leicestershire Probation Service.

March 18
BIS Applied Systems.
Royal College of Defence Studies.

March 19
South Yorkshire Police.

March 23
William Hill Organisation.

March 25
Overseas Women's Club.

Tamils

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the original 64 Tamil refugees are currently in detention; if he will list the locations of the detainees and the number per centre, giving a breakdown by sex; and if he will list the dates and numbers of those given temporary admission.

Mr. Waddington: On 5 April, 32 of the 64 Sri Lankans who sought entry on arrival on 13 February were still detained in the following places:

Location	*Male*	*Female*
Harmondsworth (10)	1	9
Foston Hall (12)	12	—
Larchmere House (10)	10	—

Temporary admission was authorised for 32 on the following dates:

Date	*Number*
13 February 1987	6
13 March 1987	7
20 March 1987	16
24 March 1987	1
31 March 1987	2

Nuclear Disasters

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cumbria as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Chapel cross *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles, *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population within (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles of the power station, *(c)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of the population of Carlisle, *(d)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high risk groups from Carlisle, *(e)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of low mobility groups from Carlisle, and *(f)* what time estimates have been made for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Carlisle; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculation of any such time estimates to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the Metropolitan police 1986 force strategic appraisal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the force appraisal is one of a number of internal management documents prepared as the basis for discussion of future force strategy. It is not intended for publication.

Maguire Case

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the conclusions of the internal Scotland Yard inquiry instigated last March by the present Commissioner designate of the Metropolitan police, Mr. Peter Imbert, into the Maguire case; and what part Mr. Imbert himself played in interrogations of those subsequently convicted for the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.

Mr. Maller: I understand that there has been no formal internal inquiry by the Metropolitan police into the Maguire case. Following a meeting with Mr. Robert Kee in March last year, Mr. Imbert asked one of his officers to examine case papers in advance of the publication of Mr. Kee's book. The Metropolitan police subsequently assisted our review of the case by responding to specific questions which we put to them: their responses are full reflected in the memorandum on the case which was placed in the Library on 20 January.

Mr. Imbert, who was then a superintendent serving in the bomb squad, assisted in 1974 in the questioning of Carol Richardson, Paul Hill, Gerard Conlon and Patrick Armstrong about the Woolwich pub bombing.

Canine Faeces

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the pilot scheme to test the effectiveness of the byelaws relating to the removal of canine faeces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 2 September 1985 new byelaws came into force in four local authority areas which made it an offence for a person in charge of a dog to fail to remove any faeces it might deposit in designated parks, recreation grounds and open spaces. The authorities were the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, Gosport borough council, North-West Leicestershire district council and Rochester-upon-Medway city council. Gosport and Rochester-upon-Medway also adopted similar new byelaws for footways and grass verges adjacent to the carriageways of highways. The four local authorities conducted a pilot scheme to test the effect of the new byelaws.

We have placed in the Library a copy of a report prepared by a steering committee of officers from these authorities and Home Office officials which has been monitoring the scheme. The report concludes that, because the parks and other controlled areas are now much cleaner than before the scheme began, similar byelaws should now be offered as models for adoption by other local authorities in England and Wales. It is also clear from the report that the success of the scheme has depended on the willingness of the local authorities concerned to allocate the resources necessary for publicity, waste disposal and enforcement, and above all on the hard work they have all put into making the byelaws work.

Taking account of the results of the pilot scheme we have now considered in greater depth whether to offer the new byelaws as models for adoption by other local authorities. In reaching our decision we have applied the tests of whether it is both reasonable and necessary to subject dog owners to these byelaws, whether such an obligation is capable of enforcement and whether if enforced it is likely to be unreasonably oppressive in its operation.

Applying these tests we have concluded that the proposed new byelaws for parks, recreation grounds and open spaces should be made available to local authorities as model byelaws, provided there is somewhere else people can exercise their dogs without having to clear up after them. There is a strong case for allowing local authorities to apply these controls to such areas if they wish to do so. The alternative could, in rural areas, be local areas of countryside. We hope that before deciding which areas should be controlled local authorities will ensure that their proposals are well publicised in their localities and will where appropriate consult local organisations of dog owners and other residents. We would not approve the new byelaws for areas such as heaths and woodlands and areas used by horses and grazing animals, because it would be unreasonable to expect people to clear up after their dogs there. We are willing to allow the new byelaws for the whole of parks which are completely, or almost completely, used as children's play areas and sports grounds, even if they are not enclosed, and even though alternative areas do not exist.

Different considerations however apply to the proposed new model byelaws for footways and grass verges. It would be an unreasonable burden on a dog owner to expect him on pain of prosecution to comply with the new byelaws whenever he took his dog out for a walk. We have also concluded that there would be grave difficulties associated with the enforcement of these new byelaws. We can also foresee the risk of serious disputes between dog owners and other users of footways and grass verges. We have therefore decided that we are not prepared to confirm further the new byelaws as in the pilot scheme in so far as they relate to footways and grass verges, but district and borough councils will continue to be able to adopt and enforce the existing model byelaws which make it an offence for a person in charge of a dog to permit it to foul such areas.

Local authorities can do much by enforcing the revised byelaws for footpaths and applying the new byelaws to some parks and recreation areas. They can also promote campaigns to encourage dog owners to comply with the law. A number of local authorities have done so, and in the longer term public education of this kind is more effective than recourse to the criminal law. We are therefore issuing a circular to local authorities to draw their attention to the valuable experience gained from the pilot scheme and the criteria which will be applied in considering applications for the new and revised byelaws. We hope that this will assist councils to deal effectively with the fouling of public areas by dogs. We are also inviting the local authority associations to submit comments and suggestions relating to the details of the operation of the byelaws.

We are grateful to the four local authorities which conducted the pilot scheme for making this action possible.

Immigration

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce selective immigration controls on embarkation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: In the context of our membership of the European Communities I have decided that we can introduce simpler and more rapid procedures for the control by immigration officers of passengers leaving the country without impairing the overall effectiveness of immigration control. Arrangements will shortly be introduced for the selective control on the embarkation of British and other EC nationals. Arrangements will be made to ensure that immigration officers continue to assist in the identification of wards of court and others whom the police and other agencies wish to identify. I have no plans to introduce selective embarkation controls for other nationals or to introduce selective immigration controls for any passengers seeking to enter this country.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Tebbit: My sole official visit in March, excluding my constituency engagements and engagements as chairman of the Conservative party, was to address the annual lunch of the Central and West Lancashire chamber of commerce on 10 March in Blackpool.

ENERGY

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Department plans to spend £217 million on R and D and related work in 1987-88. Details are set out in the Supply Estimates (Class VI, Vote 2, sections C1 and D1).

The Department has no in-house R and D facilities. It operates on a customer-contractor basis as far as that is possible on all the work that it funds.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department has implemented a range of measures to improve management and value for money.

Budgets for programme expenditure on research and development and industrial support, totalling some £250 million in 1987-88, have been fully devolved to managers in divisions, and line managers have also been given devolved responsibility for elements of administrative expenditure.

The Department's management information systems have been developed and refined to assist the top management in its annual review of divisions' objectives, priorities and resources.

Targets and output measures are being progressively developed, wherever possible; for example the Department has achieved a target of securing a 50 per cent. contribution by non-Government participants in funding offshore safety R and D; and the Energy Efficiency Office has a target to achieve energy savings of 3 million tonnes of coal equivalent by June 1988 through the energy efficiency demonstration scheme.

Initiatives taken in the Department to improve management and efficiency has resulted in important savings; for example, accommodation costs have been reduced by nearly £1 million since 1984-85, and savings amounting to over £0·5 million were secured in the first nine months of 1986-87 on the Department's purchasing of goods and services. Departmental manpower has been reduced by some 20 per cent. since April 1979.

Dungeness A Power Station (Geological Fault)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the investigations by the Central Electricity Generating Board, into the geological fault discovered near Dungeness A power station, to be complete.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB has advised me that at present there is no evidence of any threat to the continued operation of either the A or B stations as a result of the geological fault. Further investigations of the site are being undertaken, and the CEGB hopes to complete the work this summer. I am advised that it is likely to take up to six months to complete the analysis.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Peter Walker: I made no official visits outside London in March.

Oil and Pipelines Agency

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the Oil and Pipelines Agency has published its first year's accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The agency submitted its first report and accounts to me today. These cover the 13 months ended 31 December 1986. I have laid copies before both Houses.

The accounts show that the agency had a successful first 13 months operations, in which it made an operating profit of just over £6 million. The agency also substantially completed its duty under the Oil and Pipelines Act 1985 to realise the surplus net assets which it inherited from the British National Oil Corporation. Details are given in the notes to the accounts. As shown there, I have determined, with the approval of the Treasury, that the agency should

retain an amount of £2,380,000 as its initial capital. This is £380,000 more than the figure shown in the public expenditure White Paper published in January (Cm. 56-II, page 407). This increase was agreed following discussions with the agency during preparation of its accounts, and reflects the need to treat as a capital item the costs which the agency incurred in establishing itself in smaller offices.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Medical Research

59. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total amount of public money devoted to medical research since 1979.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Financial year	*£ million*
1979-80	91·8
1980-81	108·1
1981-82	143·7
1982-83	151·6
1983-84	159·3
1984-85	162·6
1985-86	169·2
1986-87	176·4

The figures shown for the years 1979-80 and 1980-81 are on a different basis from those shown for later years. Before 1981-82 figures exclude the Health Department's commissioning funds for biomedical research because these figures cannot be identified separately. In 1981-82 these funds were transferred to the Medical Research Council and are included in that year and the subsequent years shown.

The figures include the Medical Research Council's grant-in-aid and expenditure on medical research by the DHSS and the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Expenditure on medical research in universities and medical schools is excluded. Information about such expenditure is not collected.

GCSE

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the NAS/UWT on the GCSE examination; if he has any plans to alter the funding that has been made available by the Government to local education authorities for this examination; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Discussions were held with NAS/UWT in March as part of the Government's early monitoring of GCSE resourcing. The NAS/UWT's representations were based on a sample survey conducted in the early weeks of GCSE courses. For 1987-88 the Government have made further substantial provision for the GCSE, as detailed in my right hon. Friend's reply of 31 March, at column *447* to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). We will continue to monitor the needs of the GCSE and to make appropriate provision.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local education authorities about late arrival of materials necessary for the teaching of GCSE in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: A small number of local education authorities earlier reported difficulties in taking up their 1986-87 education support grant allocations for GCSE books and equipment, but current indications are that these allocations have been fully taken up before the close of the financial year.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of schools in England have now received all necessary materials for the teaching of the GCSE.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's Inspectorate has reported that, on average, the material resources available in schools are sufficient at this stage. There is concern, however, about the disparity of resources between individual schools. The Government's planned provision for £115 million expenditure on GCSE in 1987-88 will enable local education authorities to meet in full their assessment of further GCSE needs of schools in that year.

Teachers (Statistics)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's estimate of the number of qualified teachers in *(a)* all subjects and *(b)* science and technology subjects who are presently not employed but are of employable age.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information is held by the Department on qualified teachers in England and Wales who are not in teaching posts. However, it does not distinguish those who are not employed from those who are in non-teaching employment. The latest date for which information is readily available in 1984. There were then some 400,000 qualified teachers aged under 60 who were recorded as being out of teaching service: 150,000 graduates and 250,000 non-graduates. Information on subjects of teachers' qualifications is not recorded for non-graduates. The majority of out-of-service teachers with qualifications in craft, design and technology of engineering would be likely to come into this category. Among the 150,000 graduates were 87,000 whose last service had been in secondary schools or establishments of further education and 18,000 of those had a science of technology subject recorded as the main specialism in their degree.

Women Graduates

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what financial help is available to women science and technology graduates wishing to return to work.

Mrs. Rumbold: Graduates who wish to train as teachers will be eligible for mandatory awards for study leading to the post-graduate certificate of education from local education authorities. If they study to become secondary mathematics, physics or technology teachers, they will attract a £1,250 tax-free national bursary in addition to the award.

Discretionary and postgraduate training awards for other courses may be available from LEA's or research councils respectively.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what courses sponsored by his Department are provided to re-equip women science and technology graduates to return to work after leaving to start a family.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have made available £6·4 million to higher education for specially designed courses to increase the supply of teachers in shortage subjects, including physics and craft, design and technology.

These courses are open equally to men and women graduates. Some have been specially designed to include part-time study and distance learning with women graduates returning to teaching after starting a family in mind.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to attract women science and technology graduates back into teaching after they have left the profession to start a family.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are trying hard to attract women science and technology graduates back to teaching. Expenditure on updating courses will qualify for grant under the new in-service training scheme. New forms of training are being designed which will allow part-time and distance learning study which should be especially helpful for women. Discussions with local authorities about more flexible employment practices are taking place.

The Government are involved in a number of publicity initiatives, and the new teaching as a career unit will encourage women teachers to return to the profession.

St. Mary's Parish Church School, Stockport

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give his reasons for agreeing to the closure of St. Mary's parish church school, Stockport.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend agreed with the educational and financial case for the school's closure put forward by Stockport education authority.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Walden: The Department's expenditure through the science budget, which funds the research councils, is planned to be £675 million in 1987-88. It is estimated that a further £710 million will be spent in 1987-88 on research in universities from UGC grants and tuition fee income. In addition, the Department has a small budget—£13 million in 1987-88—from which it commissions research into educational matters.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My principal official visits during March were:

Tuesday 10 March:
Workbase Adult Literary Initiative Polygram Operations Limited, Walthamstow

Friday 13 March:
The Royal Observatory, Edinburgh

Wednesday 18 March:
Manchester Business school

Monday 23 March:
Wells Cathedral school

Wednesday 25 March:
Visit to Durham LEA

Friday 27 March:
BP research centre, Sunbury-on-Thames

Monday 30 March:
Visit to Kent LEA

Teachers (Special Qualifications)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department on the numbers of teachers in each local education authority with special qualifications relevant to the teaching of pupils with statements under the Education Act 1981, other than teachers employed full-time in special schools; if he will publish what information is available for the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1987, c. *579-82*]: The printed table gave incorrect figures for Somerset and omitted the authorities of Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Warwickshire, West Sussex and Wiltshire.

Pursuant to my reply of 23 March, column *32*, individual teachers' records held by this Department for pension purposes include information on some special qualifications for teaching children with handicaps. Not all of the qualifications covered carry a salary benefit so there may be some under-recording. The latest available information is for 31 March 1985 and is given for each local education authority in England.

Full-time teachers with special qualifications for teaching children with handicaps
England: maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools
31 March 1985 (provisional)

	Teaching in		
	Special classes	*Other classes*	*Total*
Barking	4	3	7
Barnet	5	9	14
Bexley	8	3	11
Brent	4	5	9
Bromley	10	3	13
Croydon	5	6	11
Ealing	6	5	11
Enfield	2	3	5
Haringey	2	8	10
Harrow	7	4	11
Havering	3	6	9
Hillingdon	2	9	11
Hounslow	4	4	8
Kingston	3	0	3
Merton	1	1	2
Newham	2	2	4
Redbridge	3	4	7
Richmond	0	3	3
Sutton	1	3	4
Waltham Forest	0	4	4
ILEA	18	96	114
Birmingham	13	33	46
Coventry	7	16	23

	Teaching in Special classes	Other classes	Total
Dudley	6	5	11
Sandwell	7	11	18
Solihull	7	7	14
Walsall	6	8	14
Wolverhampton	16	13	29
Knowsley	3	5	8
Liverpool	3	33	36
St. Helens	4	12	16
Sefton	3	11	14
Wirral	2	10	12
Bolton	0	5	5
Bury	4	7	11
Manchester	0	6	6
Oldham	0	5	5
Rochdale	7	8	15
Salford	5	5	10
Stockport	7	4	11
Tameside	3	4	7
Trafford	5	2	7
Wigan	2	5	7
Barnsley	5	7	12
Doncaster	4	9	13
Rotherham	7	4	11
Sheffield	13	21	34
Bradford	6	9	15
Calderdale	0	8	8
Kirklees	9	8	17
Leeds	0	20	20
Wakefield	0	3	3
Gateshead	2	11	13
Newcastle	6	24	30
North Tyneside	4	6	10
South Tyneside	4	9	13
Sunderland	7	4	11
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0
Avon	6	59	65
Bedfordshire	3	23	26
Berkshire	13	22	35
Buckinghamshire	1	24	25
Cambridgeshire	3	36	39
Cheshire	33	16	49
Cleveland	1	27	28
Cornwall	16	13	29
Cumbria	14	5	19
Derbyshire	27	35	62
Devon	5	35	40
Dorset	9	9	18
Durham	4	19	23
East Sussex	10	25	35
Essex	26	25	51
Gloucestershire	4	29	33
Hampshire	16	36	52
Hereford and Worcester	18	23	41
Hertfordshire	10	11	21
Humberside	27	37	64
Isle of Wight	3	3	6
Kent	12	39	51
Lancashire	24	27	51
Leicestershire	31	37	68
Lincolnshire	16	16	32
Norfolk	12	13	25
North Yorkshire	9	23	32
Northamptonshire	20	16	36
Northumberland	8	10	18
Nottinghamshire	15	23	38
Oxfordshire	9	13	22
Shropshire	5	9	14
Somerset	15	17	32
Staffordshire	18	17	35
Suffolk	10	19	29
Surrey	25	19	44
Warwickshire	10	13	23
West Sussex	7	16	23
Wiltshire	4	14	18

WALES

Marginal Land

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers on Anglesey have applied for reconsideration of marginal land status; how many decisions have now been made; how many decisions have allowed an increase in marginal land; on what grounds applications have been refused; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The position on representations and decisions concerning farmers on Anglesey is as follows:

	Number
Number of representations against exclusion from the less favoured area	314
Number of decisions made and conveyed to the farmer	119
Number of representations accepted for inclusion in United Kingdom case to European Commission provided that economic and demographic tests are satisfactory:	10
Number of representations rejected on:	
(a) non contiguity grounds	46
(b) land quality grounds	48
(c) lack of defensible boundary grounds	15

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out the various extra grants and advantages available to farmers who have marginal land; and how many of these involve funding by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the European Commission.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Hill livestock compensatory allowances (HLCAs) are payable to specialist beef and sheep farmers within the less favoured area. LFA sheep farmers eligible for the sheep annual premium (SAP) also benefit from advance part-payments of that premium. The European Commission funds approximately 25 per cent. of HLCA expenditure and 100 per cent. of SAP expenditure.

LFA farmers are eligible for higher rates of grant on certain capital investments. Such grants have been provided under the agriculture and horticulture grant scheme and two European schemes (the farm and horticulture development scheme and the agriculture and horticulture development scheme). The European schemes attract 25 per cent. funding from the European Commission. The agriculture improvement scheme has now replaced the earlier schemes. With some exceptions, it also offers higher rates of grant in the LFA. LFA farmers are also able to benefit from grant assistance towards the provision and development of on-farm tourism and craft facilities. The European element of this scheme is funded by the European Commission at the rate of 25 per cent., except for the young farmer supplement where the rate is 50 per cent.

The agriculture and horticultural co-operation scheme 1985 offers forage co-operatives in the LFA grant of 25 per cent. towards the cost of forage machinery and 15 per cent. towards the cost of tractors. This scheme is totally funded by the United Kingdom Government.

Dairy farmers in the LFA receive a concession on the co-responsibility levy on milk. In 1986, non-LFA producers paid 2 per cent. of the target price, 0·364p per litre, whilst LFA producers paid 1·5 per cent. of the target price, 0·273p per litre, on the first 60,000 kg of milk.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales by whom the requirements as to boundaries of marginal land have been laid down; what representations he has made to the European Commission about such boundaries; whether grants presently available to farmers are payable on the basis of *(a)* farm boundaries or *(b)* any other features of delineation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: For land to be granted less favoured area status it must meet physical, economic and demographic criteria laid down by the European Commission. Each member state has discretion to set its own requirements in the determination of the boundary of land meeting these criteria. In the United Kingdom Ministers have decided that to facilitate administration, the LFA boundary shall normally be defined by hard natural or man-made physical features in the landscape. Thus the LFA boundary may encompass whole farms or part farms. In the latter case, the extra financial assistance associated with LFA status is payable on that part of the farm falling within the boundary.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if all farms in respect of which applications have been made for redesignation of marginal land have been or will be visited by his officials.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Following the enlargement of the less favoured area in 1984, it was announced that farmers could make representations against exclusion but only with regard to land immediately adjacent to the existing LFA boundary or pockets of non-adjacent land extending to at least 1,200 hectares in size. All land subject to representations and falling within either category has been or will be inspected by my officials.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales by what amount marginal land may be increased in Wales, as a percentage of the total, under European Community directives; if he will identify the European Community directives; what representations he has made to the European Commission about any increase in this percentage; what are the financial implications for his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There are no restrictions under EC directives concerning a limit by which the LFA in Wales may be extended, and, consequently, no representations to the European Commission on this subject have been necessary. The financial implications of any extension to the LFA cannot be assessed until the current representations exercise is completed.

National Art Collections

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what specific undertakings he has received from the Court of Governors and Council that adequate manpower resources and operating funds will in future be provided by those bodies to ensure that the Welsh national art collections are curated and conserved to the professional standards observed by other national museums funded by British taxpayers; and whether he will place a set of the relevant documents in the Library.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the context of the proposals for the extension and upgrading of the Cathays park building announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last December, discussions are taking place between the museum authorities and the Welsh Office about the staffing and other needs of the art department to establish what provision is needed for the care and display of the art collection. In the meantime action has already been taken to improve the management of the art department and conservation facilities.

National Museum of Wales (Japanese Exhibition)

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the £200,000 fee payable for the exhibition of masterpieces from the national museum of Wales at present touring Japan is intended to meet the museum's costs in preparing for the exhibition and undertaking the necessary research and work in preparation of photographs and catalogue material; and if he will place a set of detailed accounts in the Library.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: About half the receipts represent a contribution towards the costs incurred by the museum, including estimated apportioned costs of the time of museum staff for which detailed accounts are not kept. The museum's annual accounts are placed in the Library of the House.

NHS (Manpower Steering Group)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to report on the findings of the Health Service manpower steering group; what manpower supply problems have been brought to the group's attention; and what recommendations and results have ensued.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The manpower steering group (MSG) was set up last year as a sub-committee of the executive committee of the Health Policy Board. Its establishment and terms of reference were announced in circular WHC(86)8, a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House. MSG has given early attention to the development of a comprehensive manpower strategy for the NHS in Wales. This will be published shortly. The group is also giving consideration to issues of manpower supply in a variety of staff groups including medical, nursing, finance and the therapies. This work has only just begun, and it is too early to say when recommendations will be made to the executive committee.

Potato Industry

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the state of the potato industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes. If market prices are depressed, I believe that support arrangements will provide growers with a reasonable level of fall-back support.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

ECGD (Computers)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the costs of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's computerisation programme and anticipated future developments.

Mr. Alan Clark: The costs of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's computerisation operations and

developments were £4,952,000 in 1986-87 and are estimated to be £6,628,000 in 1987-88. These figures include staff, operation and full capital costs.

Japan

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, in view of Japan's trading practices, the Government will give their support to the European Community Commission proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 217684 on protection against dumped or subsidised imports from countries not members of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to my reply on this subject to the hon. Member on 17 February 1987 at column *523*.

Homelocators (UK) Ltd.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, if the Director General of Fair Trading now has sufficient evidence to seek an assurance under Part III of the Fair Trading Act 1973 from the national directors of Homelocators (UK) Ltd., Mr. Dank and Mr. Jones, and from their associate franchise holders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: This is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading, and I will ask him to write to the hon. Member direct.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Butcher: My Department plans to spend £415 million in support of research and development in 1987-88.

Of this total, £44 million is for the running of the Department's four research establishments, the National Physical Laboratory, the National Engineering Laboratory, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist and the Warren Spring Laboratory, where the customer-contractor principle helps to direct work undertaken on a number of industrially relevant subjects.

The remainder of the Department's expenditure will support R and D across a range of industrial sectors with the largest shares being accounted for by information technology and advanced electronics and aerospace.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Butcher: The Department has introduced a large number of reforms aimed at increasing efficiency and achieving better value for money since the FMI was launched in 1982. In the early stages the reforms could be clearly attributed to the FMI, but with the passage of time, and consistent with the main thrust of the FMI, its effects have become increasingly indistinguishable from the Department's improvements in management and value for money generally.

The Department has achieved a more structured approach to decision taking through the annual activity and resource management review, greater attention to evaluation and the widespread adoption of work programmes, objectives and targets which are approved by DTI Ministers. Greater and better management awareness of costs has been secured by the establishment of responsibility cost centres, deputy secretary running cost budgets, the provision of management information systems, more comprehensive training, and the introduction of performance measures where practicable.

Austin Rover (Information Exchange)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to his reply of 30 March, *Official Report* column *358*, what guidance was given by his Department between December 1985 and February 1986 to Austin Rover about exchanging information with the Ford Motor Company.

Mr. Channon: As I informed the hon. Member in my answer on 30 March, at column *358*, Ford and the Rover Group Board agreed to open exploratory talks in December 1985. My Department was kept informed in broad terms of progress in these talks, but the specific information exchanged was a matter for the judgment of the commercial parties.

Strategic Mineral Stockpile

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further disposals from the strategic mineral stockpile will be effected during 1987-88; and on what basis the sales will take place.

Mr. Channon: Plans are being made for the disposal in 1987-88 of about one quarter of the present contents of the strategic mineral stockpile.

The material will be offered for sale on a competitive tender basis, in the first instance to those companies for which the material was purchased. No price preference will be given. Disposals will continue to take place in a manner which seeks to avoid undue disruption of the market.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Channon: On Saturday, 14 March I visited Worcester. On Monday, 16 March I visited Brough, Hull and Scunthorpe.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Jews

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give his estimate of the numbers of Soviet Jews who were allowed to emigrate from the Soviet Union during the month of March.

Mr. Renton: Four hundred and seventy. This is the highest monthly total for some years. We hope this encouraging trend will continue.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I had no official engagements outside London during March, apart from official visits overseas.

Other Foreign and Commonwealth Ministers had the following engagements outside London during March:

Mr. Renton addressed the World Veterans Federation conference in Brighton on 9 March.

Mrs. Chalker attended a briefing lunch for businessmen on the EC internal market at a Heathrow hotel on 2 March.

Lady Young spoke at King's school, Canterbury on 4 March.

PRIME MINISTER

Crown Estate Commissioners

Q138. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to alter the existing ministerial responsibilities for the Crown Estate Commissioners; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

Mr. Amess asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 7 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I am attending a dinner to mark the 30th anniversay of the Institute of Economic Affairs.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

The Prime Minister: I visited north Wales on Friday 13 March.

Nuclear Weapons (Modernisation)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what is her policy towards the modernisation of British nuclear weapons in the light of the study by the Bradford School of Peace Studies, a copy of which has been sent to her.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 24 March, at column 162.

EMPLOYMENT

Apprenticeships

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will list the numbers *(a)* entering apprenticeships *(b)* in apprenticeships and *(c)* completing apprenticeships in each of the industries for which industrial training boards have operated in each year since 1964.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what was the level of Exchequer support for apprenticeships at current and constant prices in each of the years from 1964 to 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available for the financial years 1964-65 to 1974-75. Between 1975-76 and 1982-83, support was provided in the form of premium grants for first year apprentices and grants for award holders, as well as support for redundant apprentices and unplaced award holders, as follows:

Year	*At cash price* £ *million*	*At constant price (1985-86 base)*[1] £ *million*
1975-76	18·9	51·0
1976-77	36·0	85·7
1977-78	38·9	81·4
1978-79	37·8	71·5
1979-80	24·0	38·8
1980-81	33·2	45·3
1981-82	36·0	44·7
1982-83[2]	38·7	44·8

[1] Prices adjusted by the GDP Deflator

[2] For financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, expenditure covering residual payments for apprentice training under these schemes which commenced prior to September 1983, and continued support for redundant apprentices, was as follows:

Year	*At cash price* £ *million*	*At constant price (1985-86 base)* £ *million*
1983-84	20·3	22·5
1984-85	3·2	3·4

Since September 1983 substantial support for long duration training including apprenticeships has been provided through the youth training scheme. It is not possible to identify the direct level of Exchequer support on a comparable basis with the table.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leigh asked the Paymaster General what are the month-by-month unemployment figures for the constituency of Gainsborough and Horncastle since June

1983; and if he will state for each figure what percentage this represents of the work force of the Gainsborough and Horncastle constituency.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the number of unemployed claimants in the Gainsborough and Horncastle parliamentary constituency between June 1983 and February 1987. This comparison is affected by changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data. Equivalent estimates of the work force are not available.

Unemployed claimants in Gainsborough and Horncastle Parliamentary Constituency

	Number
June 1983	3,597
July	3,573
August	3,397
September	3,593
October	3,479
November	3,551
December	3,603
January 1984	3,775
February	3,810
March	3,749
April	3,690
May	3,632
June	3,534
July	3,722
August	3,731
September	3,875
October	3,729
November	3,820
December	3,846
January 1985	4,065
February	4,105
March	3,964
April	3,980
May	3,918
June	3,846
July	3,947
August	3,871
September	3,946
October	3,852
November	4,014
December	4,152
January 1986	4,358
February	4,369
March	4,252
April	4,172
May	4,197
June	4,175
July	4,276
August	4,113
September	4,182
October	3,964
November	4,028
December	4,018
January 1987	4,233
February	4,260

Mr. Leigh asked the Paymaster General what are the month by month unemployment figures for the town of Gainsborough since June 1983; and if he will state for each figure what percentage this represents of Gainsborough's work force.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the wards of Gainsborough, East, Gainsborough, North and Gainsborough, South-West from June 1983 to February 1987. This comparison is affected by changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data. Equivalent estimates of the work force are not available.

Unemployed claimants in Gainsborough

	Number
June 1983	1,282
July	1,285
August	1,182
September	1,253
October	1,253
November	1,278
December	1,298
January 1984	1,352
February	1,359
March	1,340
April	1,333
May	1,304
June	1,260
July	1,306
August	1,310
September	1,350
October	1,321
November	1,347
December	1,349
January 1985	1,399
February	1,372
March	1,346
April	1,340
May	1,319
June	1,296
July	1,284
August	1,248
September	1,289
October	1,363
November	1,406
December	1,456
January 1986	1,499
February	1,472
March	1,442
April	1,393
May	1,420
June	1,401
July	1,391
August	1,340
September	1,359
October	1,412
November	1,437
December	1,431
January 1987	1,493
February	1,465

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will show from the 1986 labour force survey the number of people in Great Britain who are economically active and *(a)* in employment, *(b)* unemployed and *(c)* others on Government training schemes, broken down (i) by ethnic origin and (ii) by age in five-year age bands and the comparable figures from the 1984 and 1985 labour force surveys.

Mr. Lee: Preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1986, together with comparable estimates from the 1984 and 1985 surveys, on the employment status of the economically active by ethnic origin and age are shown in the following table:

Economically active persons in Great Britain—employment status, ethnic origin and age (thousands)

Ethnic origin	*Economically active*	*In Employment*		*[4]Unemployed*
		Employees and self employed	*On Government employment and training schemes*	
1984[1]				
White	24,895	21,948	295	2,652
Non-White	1,042	812	16	213
Of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	293	217	[5]	67
Indian	371	311	[5]	56
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	128	83	[5]	44
Other	249	202	[5]	46
All Ethnic Origins[3]	26,304	23,072	315	2,916
Age				
16-19	2,432	1,690	227	515
20-24	3,541	2,903	34	604
25-29	3,004	2,342	12	390
30-34	2,838	2,532	10	296
35-39	3,277	3,002	[5]	267
40-44	2,724	2,502	[5]	216
45-49	2,534	2,355	[5]	174
50-54	2,349	2,182	[5]	162
55-59	1,991	1,816	[5]	171
60-64	1,205	1,104	[5]	98
65-69	237	222	[5]	15
70 and over	171	163	[5]	[5]
All Ages	26,304	23,072	315	2,916
1985[1]				
White	25,257	22,302	373	2,582
Non-White	1,013	792	18	203
Of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	299	227	10	62
Indian	304	248	[5]	52
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	137	95	[5]	42
Other	272	223	[5]	46
All Ethnic Origins[3]	26,533	23,343	396	2,814
Age				
16-19	2,440	1,685	290	464
20-24	3,643	3,033	41	568
25-29	3,116	2,713	17	387
30-34	2,845	2,541	10	294
35-39	3,342	3,062	[5]	274
40-44	2,809	2,602	[5]	202
45-49	2,573	2,369	[5]	197
50-54	2,298	2,130	[5]	161
55-59	1,986	1,820	[5]	157
60-64	1,084	999	[5]	83
65-69	245	228	[5]	18
70 and over	171	162	[5]	[5]
All Ages	26,533	23,343	396	2,814
1986[1]				
White	25,308	22,345	377	2,585
Non-White	1,071	841	17	213
Of which:				
West Indian/Guyanese	283	214	[5]	61
Indian	352	289	[5]	61
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	139	97	[5]	40
Other	297	241	[5]	52
All Ethnic Origins[3]	26,657	23,341	399	2,827
Age				
16-19	2,409	1,674	264	471
20-24	3,665	3,024	62	579
25-29	3,221	2,787	20	414
30-34	2,898	2,590	11	297
35-39	3,329	3,048	12	268
40-44	2,928	2,715	[5]	205
45-49	2,559	2,374	[5]	180
50-54	2,279	2,114	[5]	160
55-59	1,945	1,786	[5]	151
60-64	1,041	956	[5]	80

Ethnic origin	Economically active	In Employment		[4]Unemployed
		Employees and self employed	On Government employment and training schemes	
65-69	232	216	[5]	17
70 and over	151	147	[5]	[5]
All Ages	26,657	23,341	399	2,827

[1] Estimates relate to the spring of each year and to resdient in private households.
[3] Preliminary results.
[3] Includes those who did not state their ethnic origin.
[4] Those persons without a job who were looking for work in the survey reference week or prevented from seeking work by temporary sickness or holiday, or who were waiting for the results of a job application or waiting to start a job they had already obtained.
[5] Less than ten thousand.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will provide a breakdown of the latest national unemployment figures according to standard under 18, 18 to 24, 25 to 44, and 45 years plus age groupings, by the standard under 26, 26 to 52, 52 to 104, 104 to 156, 156 to 208, 208 to 260, and 260 plus weeks duration of unemployment groupings as a total, and by sex; and how these figures compare to those of 11 April 1985.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment analysed by age and duration for the United Kingdom is published in table 2.6 of the *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library. The most recent data relate to 8 January 1987, which are published on page S25 of the March 1987 *Gazette*. Figures for 11 April 1985 on page S31 of the June 1985 *Gazette*.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list, for each year of the age range 16 to 25, the number and proportion of those in school, work, further education, higher education, community programmes, or other specified schemes;

(2) what was the number and percentage rate of unemployment among 16 and 17-year-olds *(a)* nationally, *(b)* by ethnic origin, *(c)* by region and *(d)* by sex at the latest available date and for September, January and June in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the numbers of people receiving training for less than a week, 1 to 4 weeks, 4 to 12 weeks, 12 to 26 weeks, and 26 to 52 weeks, in each of the industries in the standard industrial classification; and what is his estimate of training expenditures, private and public, on training in each of those industries.

Mr. Trippier: Preliminary results from the 1986 "Labour Force Survey", which are not separately available by public and private sector, indicate that the following people in employment were receiving job-related training lasting up to a year in the four weeks before the survey interview.

Spring 1986

Thousands

	Less than a week	1 week but less than 4	4 weeks but less than 12	12 weeks but less than 26	26 weeks but less than 52	Total
Manufacturing	117	29	41	26	47	260
Services	462	98	177	71	171	988
Other	55	[1]	11	[1]	24	108
Not specified	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	13
Total	635	138	230	109	258	1,370

[1] Cell size less than 10,000.

Equivalent figures on expenditure are not currently available.

The Manpower Services Commission's study of funding of vocational and education and training should provide more information on training expenditure, both public and private, in all industry sectors. This study is due to report in spring 1988.

Vocational Qualifications (JTS)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what steps he has taken to make available recognised vocational qualifications for those on the job training scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Managing agents are required to ensure that every trainee entering new JTS has the opportunity to gain a recognised vocational qualification or credits towards one.

Professionally Qualified Women

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what is his Department's estimate of the number of professionally qualified women who are not presently working and who could potentially be attracted back into work.

Mr. Lee: Preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1986 estimate that 184,000 women of working age (ie 16 to 59) with a degree or equivalent qualification were either unemployed or economically inactive in Great Britain.

Income Statistics

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General, if he will estimate, for the latest available date the total known annual amount of income received by individuals; of this, how much is paid *(a)* in wages and salaries to employees, *(b)* through other forms of remuneration deriving from employment, *(c)* from the profits of or remuneration of self-employment, *(d)* by way of interest, dividends and other benefits of investment, *(e)* in non-state pensions, annuities and similar payments, *(f)* in social security benefits including the remission of rent and rates through housing benefit, free prescriptions, and similar remissions or *(g)* in any other way; and how all these figures compare with the previous year's estimates.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the latest estimates of the nearest equivalent items which are available.

£ million

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Total of which	200,178	221,221	242,535	261,473	281,427	308,426
(a) Wages and salaries including pay in cash of HM Forces	117,151	125,441	134,302	143,926	153,288	166,612
(b) Income in kind and employers' contributions	20,201	22,740	24,113	26,137	27,060	28,738
(c) Income from self-employment [1]	13,862	15,291	17,291	19,551	22,442	24,240
(d) Rent, dividends and interest (gross receipts)	13,605	13,889	15,828	15,562	17,401	21,986
(e) State retirement pensions, widows benefit etc	10,946	12,846	14,231	15,325	16,314	16,999
(f) Other Social Security benefits and other grants from general government [2]	12,968	16,509	20,160	22,060	23,955	26,414
(g)(i) Other current transfers	1,448	1,620	1,815	2,082	2,290	2,450
(ii) Pensions and other benefits from life insurance and pensions	9,997	12,885	14,795	16,830	18,677	20,987

[1] After deducting interest payments, depreciation and stock appreciation.
[2] Includes family benefits, supplementary benefit, unemployment benefit other social security benefits and remission of rent.
Source: Derived from tables 4.1 and 4.4 of "United Kingdom National Accounts" 1986 edition.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many out of the total number of those still trading six months after completing the enterprise allowance scheme had been unemployed for more than a year at the time of their entry into the scheme; and how this figure compares with that available at the end of 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The first 18-month survey of the enterprise allowance scheme which reported in 1986 showed that 24 per cent. of those still trading six months after completion of the enterprise allowance scheme had been unemployed for more than a year at the time of their entry to the scheme. The figure for 1985, which related to survivors at the 15-month point, was 27 per cent.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, columns *171-2*, concerning the numbers of full-time and part-time workers, he will provide an estimate of the median and quartile earnings in each case, together with his forecast of the percentage increase from April 1986 in earnings in the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Lee: The available information on the median and quartiles of earnings is published in table 19 of part A of the 1979 "New Earnings Survey" report and in table 34 of part B of the 1986 "New Earnings Survey" report. Copies of these reports are available in the Library.

The latest information from the average earnings index indicates that in the 12-month period ending in January 1987 the underlying earnings increase was 7·5 per cent. Forecasts are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, columns *171-2*, concerning the number of full-time and part-time workers, he will provide figures showing the number of males and females on full-time adult rates divided between manual and non-manual workers, together with their average, median and quartile earnings.

Mr. Lee: In April 1979 it was estimated that there were 1·6 million full-time manual adult female employees and 3·6 million full-time non-manual adult female employees. Comparable estimates for adult males are not available.

Estimates of the earnings in April 1979 of manual and non-manual adults are published in table 15 of part A of the 1979 "New Earnings Survey" report.

Estimates for April 1986 of the numbers and earnings of full-time manual and non-manual employees on adult rates are published in table 29 and 30 respectively of part B of the 1986 "New Earnings Survey" report.

Copies of these reports are available in the Library.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The financial management initiative (FMI) covers a wide range of reforms aimed at improving financial management. It is integral to our efforts to secure improved value for money generally.

Within my Department introduction of the FMI has been given top priority by senior management. Managers at all levels now have responsibility for setting and reviewing running costs budgets and where relevant for programme budgets. Increasing use is being made in budgeting and planning of challenging but realistic value for money targets and measurement of output and performance. Top management regularly reviews the performance of all parts of my Department.

Some of these improvements can be seen in the targets, output and performance measures and value for money savings in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56); the second report of the Treasury-Cabinet Office joint management unit (JMU) on the implementation of the efficiency unit's report on consultancy, inspection and review services in Government departments and the JMU's progress report on action following the multi-departmental review of budgeting.

Other major examples of better management contributing to improvements in value for money are TRES, a two-year programme for introducing computer terminals for improving and making more cost-effective the payment of unemployment benefit and work on benefit inquiries, which will be completed at the end of this year, achieving over 1,900 staff savings worth some £15 million a year. These savings should cover the costs of the programme within about four years. The 1986 efficiency scrutiny on value for money in the community programme—which has a programme budget of about £1 billion a year—had as its main recommendation the aim to improve the outputs of the programme (for example, improving the employment prospects of participants and achieving the maximum possible benefit to the Community) and this is being carried forward actively. In addition, the Department attaches importance to developing the management skills and experience of its staff through training and management development programmes to ensure that staff can identify and implement improvements in value for money.

Training and Job Creation

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will list each of the schemes currently run by the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Employment in the area of training and job creation, together with expenditure on each scheme for the last year and estimated expenditure for the next five years, and together with the number of places on each scheme and the number of people expected to benefit from each scheme.

Mr. Lee: The employment, training and enterprise measures run by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission are listed in the "Action for Jobs" booklet. Details of provision for last year and planned provision for these measures for the period up to 1989-90 are contained in chapter 3.7 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90", volume II (Cm. 56-II), a copy of which is in the Library. Beyond this period, plans are received annually. On 28 January I announced a further expansion of certain programmes which will increase my Department's total provision beyond that shown in Cm. 56-II, without adding to public expenditure. A detailed breakdown of all this provision for 1986-87 and 1987-88 is contained in class VII of the "Government's Supply Estimates 1987-88", volume 227-VII. All of this provision is subject to parliamentary approval.

Training Allowances

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give the number of people over 18 years who receive training allowances through the Manpower Services Commission to support them in their training; and how this figure compares with each of the last eight years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

16-Year-Olds

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will list his estimates of the number of 16-year-olds in the nation in each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Lee: The following table lists the projected numbers of people in Great Britain aged 16 at the end of June each year from 1987 to 1996, as given by the 1985-based projections of the Government Actuary's Department:

Population aged 16 at mid-year Great Britain

	Thousand
1987	850
1988	797
1989	748
1990	697
1991	673
1992	648
1993	620
1994	630
1995	683
1996	709

Wages

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what was the average wage of *(a)* 16 to 17-year-old women and men, *(b)* 18 to 20-year-old women and men and *(c)* over 21-year-old women and men in 1979, 1984 and 1986; what was the unemployment figure for each group in 1979, 1984 and 1986; and what was the percentage rise over the periods.

Mr. Lee: The information from the "New Earnings Survey" in April each year is as follows:

Average gross weekly earnings (£) of full-time employees in Great Britain whose pay was unaffected by absence

				Percentage Increase	
Age	*1979*	*1984*	*1986*	*1979-84*	*1984-86*
Males					
Under 18	40·3	63·3	72·7	57·1	14·8
18 to 20	61·9	101·0	113·5	63·2	12·4
21 and over	101·4	181·6	210·7	79·1	16·0
Females					
Under 18	36·6	58·6	72·1	60·1	23·0
18 to 20	48·7	82·3	93·3	64·0	13·4
21 and over	65·3	121·2	141·8	85·6	17·0

Following is the available information about unemployment which is also in the Library. The table

shows the numbers of unemployed registrants in the under 18, 18 to 19 and over 20 years age groups in Great Britain on 5 April 1979.

The table also shows the numbers of unemployed claimants in the same age groups in Great Britain on 5 April 1984 and 10 April 1986. However, direct comparison of the figures between these dates is not possible because of changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data.

Unemployed Registrants in Great Britain—5 April 1979

	Number
Age under 18 years	73,257
Age 18 to 19 years	117,467
Age over 20 years	1,089,084

Unemployed Claimants in Great Britain

	5 April 1984	10 April 1986
Age under 18 years	155,580	181,336
Age 18 to 19 years	353,654	301,820
Age over 20 years	2,478,392	2,715,713

Skillcentres (Entrants)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will provide, for the last two years, a breakdown of entrants into skillcentres according to marital status by *(a)* under 24 years, *(b)* 25 to 44 years and *(c)* 45 plus years of age groups; and if he will give for each grouping the further breakdown according to the to-open and to-close status of the centres.

Mr. Trippier: Of 23,000 skillcentre trainees sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission's vocational education and training group who started training between 1 April 1986 and 27 December 1986, some 8,000 were less than 25 years of age when they started training, and 15,000 were aged 25 years or over.

The other information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost in the case of VETG-sponsored trainees, and is not available in the case of industry-sponsored trainees. There are no present plans to open or close skillcentres.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many young people entered the youth training scheme in 1986; how many places they occupied; and how these figures compare with 1985.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the available information; it is not possible to provide all the information in the precise form requested.

	1985-86	1986-87
Starts	[1]405,938	[1]397,581
Contracted places	[2]378,242	379,488
Average occupancy	[3]70 per cent.	[3]84 per cent.

[1] The figure for YTS starts includes some individuals who entered more than one YTS programme during the course of the year and therefore slightly overstates the number of individuals participating in the scheme as a whole.

[2] As the information is not available for 1985-86, the figure for that year is an estimate.

[3] These figures show the average number of young people actually in training during the period as a percentage of contracted places. For 1985-86 this figure is an estimate.

Area Manpower Boards

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General which area manpower boards have no members who are from ethnic minorities; what is the proportion of ethnic minorities in the general population in the area they serve; and how these figures have changed over the last two years.

Mr. Lee: Up-to-date information on the proportion of ethnic minorities in the general population in the areas served by area manpower boards is not available. The rest of the information requested is as follows. Currently 29 of the 58 boards have no member representing ethnic minorities as compared with 36 of the 55 boards in 1985.

AREA MANPOWER BOARDS WITH NO MEMBERS (FULL OR CO-OPTED) REPRESENTING ETHNIC MINORITIES.

SOUTH EAST REGION
March 1985
Hampshire and Isle of Wight
Kent
Surrey
Sussex
Essex
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire

February 1987
Hampshire and Isle of Wight
Kent
Surrey
Sussex
Essex

SOUTH WEST REGION
March 1985
Dorset and Somerset
Devon and Cornwall

February 1987
Dorset and Somerset
Devon and Cornwall
Gloucester and Wiltshire

WEST MIDLANDS REGION
March 1985
Shropshire, Hereford, Worcester
Staffordshire
Wolverhampton and Walsall

February 1987
Hereford and Worcester
Staffordshire
Shropshire

EAST MIDLANDS REGION
March 1985
Norfolk and Suffolk
Derbyshire
Lincolnshire

February 1987
Norfolk and Suffolk
Nottinghamshire

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION
March 1985
North Yorkshire
Humberside
South Yorkshire

February 1987
North Yorkshire
Humberside

NORTH WEST REGION
March 1985
Cheshire
Cumbria

February 1987
Cheshire
Cumbria

NORTHERN REGION
March 1985
Cleveland
Durham
North Tyne

WALES
March 1985
Gwynedd
Dyfed and West Glamorgan
Clwyd and Powys
Gwent
Mid and South Glamorgan

February 1987
Gwynedd
Dyfed and West Glamorgan
Clwyd and Powys

SCOTLAND
March 1985
Highlands and Islands
Grampian and Tayside
Central and Fife
Glasgow
Lanarkshire
Renfrewshire
Ayrshire
Dumfries and Galloway
Lothian and Borders

February 1987
Highlands and Islands
Grampian and Tayside
Central and Fife
Glasgow
Lanarkshire
Renfrewshire
Ayrshire
Dumfries and Galloway
Lothian and Borders

Notes:

(1) The number of boards was increased by three to 58 in July 1986 as follows:
The Leicestershire-Northamptonshire board was split into two boards, one covering Leicestershire, one covering Northamptonshire.
The Shropshire, Hereford and Worcester board was split into two boards one covering Shropshire, one covering Hereford and Worcester.
The Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire board was split into two boards one covering Buckinghamshire, one covering Hertfordshire.

(2) The number of MSC regions was increased by one (midlands) in July 1987. Boards shown in east midlands in March 1985 were, in fact, in other regions, but they are listed in this way for convenience and ease of reference.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many members of area manpower boards are *(a)* black or other ethnic minority origin, *(b)* women and *(c)* young people under 25 years; and, in each case, how many are full members, co-opted members with voting rights, and co-opted members without voting rights; and what proportion these represent of total membership, together with the comparable figures from two years ago.

Mr. Lee: Information on the age of area manpower board members is not available. The breakdown of area manpower board membership by black/ethnic minorities and women in March 1985 and February 1987 is as follows (with proportions against total membership shown in brackets):

	March 1985		*February 1987*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Full members				
(a) Black/other ethnic minority	8	(0·8)	21	(2·0)
(b) Women	82	(8·2)	153	(14·4)
Co-opted members				
(a) Black/ethnic minority	19	(1·9)	27	(2·5)
(b) Women	14	(1·4)	20	(1·9)
Co-opted members with voting rights[1]				
(a) Black/ethnic minority	3	(0·3)		

[1] Following the review of Area Manpower Boards in October 1985 co-opted members do not have voting rights.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On Wednesday 4 March and Friday 13 March, I visited the north Peckham and Bristol inner city task force areas. On Tuesday 10 March, I launched the new enterprise training in the YTS, in Reading.

My political engagements during the month took me to Nottinghamshire, Clitheroe, Liverpool, Truro, Derby, Cheshire and Torquay.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received concerning the future of the Construction Industry Training Board's involvement in the youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: Since the beginning of the year I have received representations on this subject from the Construction Industry Training Board and from the Federation of Master Builders.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter which he has recently received from Mr. Derek Gaulter of the Construction Industry Training Board on the subject of the Construction Industry Training Board's involvement in the YTS; and if he will also arrange for his reply to that letter to be published.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: No. This was a private exchange of correspondence.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General how many trainees have so far been affected in each year by the involvement of the Construction Industry Training Board in the YTS.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: The numbers of trainees who have started on the Construction Industry Training Board scheme are as follows:

	Number
1983-84	18,980
1984-85	17,884
1985-86	17,742
1986-87	19,317
Total	73,923

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General how many trainees the Construction Industry Training Board have proposed to involve in future years on their YTS.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: The Manpower Services Commission has received a proposal for some 21,500 YTS places for the board's 1987-89 two-year programme.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the record of the Construction Industry Training Board's past involvement in the YTS.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: The Construction Industry Training Board has made a valuable contribution to YTS. The Government hope that the board's contribution to YTS will continue and be developed.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the placement record of youngsters who have taken part in the Construction Industry Training Board's YTS.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: By 14 October 1986, 17,742 young people had started the board's 1985-86 one-year YTS programme. Of those, 3,486 had left the scheme prematurely, including 1,607 who left because they had found employment.

Some 12,967 young people had completed the scheme, of whom the board estimate that about 91 per cent. had been placed in employment.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General how many individual construction companies have so far been involved in the Construction Industry Training Board's YTS.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: The Construction Industry Training Board estimates that the number of construction companies which have participated so far in YTS is between 21,000 and 23,000 in total.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will give a regional breakdown for each of the years for which the scheme has existed of the number of youngsters taking part in the Construction Industry Training Board's YTS.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *38*]: The information is as follows:

Total YTS starts

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1 year Entitlement 1986-87*	*2 year Entitlement 1986-88*
Scotland:					
North	389	343	346	34	317
East	1,012	1,013	974	49	808
West	1,519	1,189	1,223	88	1,133
North	805	800	743	22	815
Yorks & Humberside	1,936	1,856	1,822	72	1,856
North West	2,033	1,993	1,928	86	2,077
East Midlands	1,333	1,258	1,294	62	1,218
West Midlands	1,675	1,601	1,529	91	1,758
East Anglia	1,294	1,043	1,031	42	1,108
Greater London	2,009	1,748	1,859	180	1,809
South East	935	995	998	73	1,114
South	1,427	1,440	1,541	121	1,550
West	1,340	1,414	1,335	111	1,452
Wales	1,097	1,074	1,014	66	1,106
	18,804	17,767	17,637	1,097	18,121

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1 year Entitlement 1986-87	2 year Entitlement 1986-88
					19,218
Bircham Newton Tring Centre	176	177	105	18	81
					99
	18,980	17,884	17,742		19,317

Moss Side Task Force

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will make a statement on the progress made by his Department in the Moss Side task force area;

(2) if he will give details of actions taken by the Moss Side task force since it was established;

(3) if he will give details of the budget allocated to the Moss Side task force during 1986-87; how much will be spent by 31 March and on what projects; and what will happen to any unspent funds after 31 March;

(4) if he will give details of the budget to be allocated to the Moss Side task force during 1987-88;

(5) if he will give details of the Moss Side task force's relationship with the local community, including the extent to which their views are taken into account and influence decisions on how the task force's budget is allocated.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *294-95*]: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his earlier questions on 28 November 1986 at columns *391-92*, in which I made a full statement on the activities and progress of the Moss Side and Hulme task force. Since that time, the task force has continued to make useful progress in developing initiatives centred on employment, enterprise and training.

I regard the close involvement of the local residents in the work of the task force as extremely important and it is focused through a steering group of local residents and workers, and councillors. The task force ensures that this group is aware of all projects and project ideas. The group discusses each funding proposal before any submission is put to me and I pay strong regard to its views.

No set budget has been allocated to the Moss Side and Hulme task force or any other inner city task force. Task force projects are financed out of the budgets of Government and Manpower Services Commission topped up as necessary out of the central project fund, of the inner cities initiative. Central unit funds are subject to the normal Treasury rules. on annuality, in common with the rest of my Department.

During 1986-87, it is anticipated that projects sponsored by the task force will spend more than £747,000 in public funds including about £200,000 from the task force top-up funds. These projects include support for *(a)* positive action for training in housing (PATH), a 12-month training scheme aimed at increasing employment opportunities for black people in housing associations; *(b)* Prince's Youth Business Trust, which supports business start-up by young people; *(c)* Selcare trust, a community programme engineering workshop; *(d)* the Northern Black Business Association.

For 1987-88 the task force is currently working up and progressing those initiatives mentioned in my reply of 28 November, including the establishment of managed workshops in association with a large private sector company; and a number of more recent proposals. Discussions are continuing with a wide range of local organisations, including the university of Manchester and the chamber of commerce and with private sector employers in the area about ways in which employers and others can help the task force to meet its objectives. A number of initiatives are being jointly pursued, including the possibilities of local procurement, training and land development.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax treatment will be given, in the light of the proposal that pension rights accruing under the new free-standing additional voluntary contributions shall not be commutable into a tax-free lump sum, to existing additional voluntary contributions paid under an employer's occupational pension scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tax relief is given for additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) to a pension scheme in order to assist members to top up their expected pension benefits and thereby provide themselves with an improved level of income in retirement.

This is why my right hon. Friend proposed in his Budget that benefits derived from the new "free-standing" AVCs, which will start next October, should not be commutable into a tax-free lump sum.

Where AVCs are paid under existing arrangements within an employer's occupational scheme, part — in many cases all — of the benefit is at present normally commuted. In order that such in-scheme AVCs should not enjoy an unfair competitive advantage over "free-standing" AVCs, we shall be bringing forward proposals under which the benefits of new AVCs will not be capable of commutation.

This provision will not apply, however, to AVCs paid (i) to an occupational scheme which provides lump sum and pension benefits in fixed proportions, thereby making it impossible for the whole AVC benefit to be taken as a lump sum or (ii) to an existing scheme by a member who is paying, or has in the past paid, AVCs to that scheme in respect of current service.

Customs Clearance Facilities

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will introduce a scheme for Customs clearance at Leeds/Bradford airport, and at the Leeds container base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Customs clearance facilities already exist at Leeds/Bradford airport and at the Leeds container base. An application for direct input facilities to the Customs computer from those locations has been made by the

Yorkshire DTI group. However, because of the current limitations on capacity of the Customs computer system and because of the need to cater for major changes to Customs procedures which must come into operation on 1 January 1988, it is unlikely that direct input facilities can be introduced at Leeds/Bradford airport and Leeds container base until after that date.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Lawson: None.

Financial Services (VAT)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the yield in 1987-88 of extending value added tax to all financial services at present exempt under *(a)* European Economic Community rules and *(b)* otherwise; and if he will provide a breakdown by service.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987]: There are considerable technical difficulties in determining the value of the supplies to which value added tax would apply, and I regret that it is not possible to make a reliable estimate of the potential revenue yield.

South Africa (Military Equipment)

Mr. Caborn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of all cases in which prosecutions or Customs compounding have taken place in relation to the supply of arms and related material to South Africa since the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 418, 1977.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *630*]: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Caborn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action has been taken following the discovery by Her Majesty's Customs officials on 27 February 1986, that cargoes on board the MS St. Maguire at Felixstowe described as agricultural machinery bound for a company known as M & I Engineers Pty, Pretoria, South Africa, were in fact components of 140mm howitzers being exported in breach of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *630*]: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the MS St. Magnus rather than MS St. Maguire. That case involved exports of field guns by Clement Shaw Ltd. and was compounded by Customs and Excise under section 152 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

Mr. Caborn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action will be taken by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to investigate allegations that the MV Lady Anita exported 140 howitzers from Felixstowe on 28 November 1984 which were destined for South Africa in breach of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *630*]: Following investigation by Customs and Excise, this case was compounded under section 152 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

Mr. Caborn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the results of the investigation into Clement Shaw Ltd in relation to possible breaches of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *630*]: The case involved the export of field guns and spare parts to South Africa. It was compounded by Customs and Excise under section 152 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

THE ARTS

Acceptances in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Minister for the Arts if any further items have been accepted in lieu of tax in the year ended 31 March 1987.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to announce that a further three items have been accepted in lieu of tax:

Item	*Amount of tax satisfied* £
Sidereal clock by Matthew Boulton	440,000
'Portrait of a Girl on a Sofa' by Philip Wilson Steer	55,000
A painting by Giacometti, and two drawings by Cezanne and Toulouse-Lautrec	206,250

The acceptance of the sidereal clock by Matthew Boulton has been allowed by the provision of extra funds from the Contingency Reserve, to which I referred in an earlier reply on 19 February, at column *737*, together with resources from the annual AIL Vote.

Allocation of the above items will be announced in due course.

I am also pleased to announce that the Portland archive, acceptance of which I notified to the House on 25 March 1986, at columns 427-28, has been allocated in accordance with the wishes of the executors to the following five institutions: Bodleian library, Oxford; British library; Hampshire record office; Nottinghamshire record office; and Nottingham university library.

Acceptance in Lieu (Stratford Mill)

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received regarding *(a)* the completeness of the information made available to the chairman and all members of the Museums and Galleries Commission in their consideration of the proposal to accept in lieu Stratford Mill by John Constable, *(b)* the role of the commission in the valuation of the painting and *(c)* the commission's recommendation concerning the recipient of the picture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have received five letters concerning the acceptance in lieu of tax of the Constable painting "The Young Waltonians", also known as "Stratford Mill"; each letter raised some of the points raised by the hon. Member.

When this painting was offered to the nation I received advice from the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission, which included independent valuations given by two separate expert advisers to the Government. They both confirmed the valuation of £10 million. I have full confidence in the advice which was given to me by the

various parties, but the final decisions on acceptance and allocation were, of course, mine. This was the most valuable item ever accepted in lieu of tax, and it was clear that speed and discretion were essential. The enhanced provisions announced by my predecessor in 1985, allowing for calls on the Contingency Reserve, have enabled the acquistion of this major work of art, central to our heritage. It has been allocated to the National Gallery, in accordance with the strongly expressed wishes of the executors of the deceased owner, and is already on public display there.

NORTHERN IRELAND

RUC (Discrimination)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by whom, in the case of those full-time and part-time women reserve police officers who were adjudged to have been discriminated against by the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland, the cost of meeting the compensation awards and legal costs of both plaintiffs and the Chief Constable will be met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The cost of compensation awards and legal costs of both plaintiffs and the Chief Constable will be met by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland. I have no more up-to-date information than that given to my hon. Friend on 6 April 1987 in response to his earlier questions. I have therefore nothing more to add to that reply.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Conservation

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields on 20 January 1987, *Official Report*, column *495*, whether a voluntary conservation body which has received aid from public funds to purchase land within an environmentally sensitive area, but which is not receiving any aid from public funds for the management of that land, will be eligible to receive payments made under the environmentally sensitive area arrangements;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *495*, whether a voluntary conservation body which is receiving aid from public funds for the management of land lying within an environmentally sensitive area, will be eligible to receive payments made under the environmentally sensitive area arrangements;

(3) pursuant to the answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *495*, in what circumstances he will refuse to enter into management agreements with voluntary conservation bodies in relation to land lying within environmentally sensitive areas which is owned or managed by those bodies.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As I said in my answer of 20 January, each such application will be considered individually. It may be necessary to refuse to enter an agreement where the body concerned has received or is continuing to receive public funds for purposes which substantially overlap with the purposes of the environmentally sensitive area. This could in principle occur where the funds in question represented a contribution either to land purchase or to land management.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to the answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *495*, whether a voluntary conservation body which has received aid from public funds to purchase land lying within an environmentally sensitive area, and which subsequently repays the moneys received, will be eligible to receive payments made under the environmentally sensitive area arrangements.

Mr. Donald Thompson: If a conservation body were contemplating such a course of action we would be prepared to consider it constructively.

Farmers (Income)

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average income of a dairy farmer in each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The estimated average net farm income of dairy farms in the United Kingdom during each of the last five years for which data are available is as follows:

Average net farm income of dairy farms

	(£'000 per farm)
1981-82	10·0
1982-83	12·4
1983-84	8·3
1984-85	8·5
1985-86	10·2

Source: The Farm business Survey in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
Note: Figures given are the latest obtained from the survey for the year in question.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department's planned expenditure on research and development in 1987-88, on a full cost basis, is £111·4 million. Of this total, £58·8 million will be commissioned under the Rothschild principles with outside contractors, primarily the Agricultural and Food Research Council, the Natural Environment Research Council, the food industry's research associations, and the universities.

The main areas of research comprise:

	£ million
Agriculture and horticulture	39·8
Food	14·9
Fisheries	1·8
Protection of the aquatic environment	0·3
River and coastal engineering	2·0

In addition, my Department funds the trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, through a grant-in-aid; of this, it is estimated that £4·9 million will be devoted to R and D in 1987-88.

The remaining £47·7 million represents the cost of R and D conducted within the Department's Agricultural

Development and Advisory Service, food science laboratories and fisheries laboratories, and central administration costs.

The allocation of funds between areas of research is guided by the recommendations of the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food; and in the case of fisheries and protection of the aquatic environment, by consultation with the industry and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to co-ordinate a national programme.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Jopling: I paid two official visits outside London in March. The first was to open the new production complex of Middlebrook Mushrooms in Selby on the 27th and the second to a dinner organised by Cumbria National Farmers Union on the 28th.

Cruelty to Animals

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has yet received notification of any decision taken by the EEC Commission indicating its response to a complaint lodged by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in February 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Planned defence expenditure in 1987-88 on research and development is £2,346 million. Customer-supplier arrangements apply throughout defence research. The major fields of activity are as follows:

MF A—Air Vehicles, Aerodynamics, Structure and Materials
MF B—Gas Turbines
MF C—Navigation and Avionics
MF D—Space
MF E—Ships and Submarines, Signature Reduction, Human Factors
MF F—Ships Systems
MF G—Undersea Warfare and Countermeasure Systems
MF H—Rocket Propulsion, Explosives and Weapons Materials
MF J—Conventional Weapons, Armaments and Command and Control
MF K—Military Vehicles and Army Engineering Equipment
MF L—Chemical and Biological Defence
MF M—Guided and Air-Launched Weapons
MF N—Tri-Service Electronic Systems
MF P—Electronic Components
MF Q—Electronic Technology

NAAFI Hostel, West Germany (Police Search)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Defence who authorised the search of the NAAFI hostel at Salamanca barracks, Soest in West Germany on 10 February 1987; what evidence there was to justify this search; what was the outcome of the search; what guidelines the Royal Military police operate under when dealing with civilians; and if NAAFI employees in Germany are subject to the same discipline as service personnel.

Mr. Freeman: The search of the NAAFI hostel at Salamanca barracks, Soest in West Germany on 10 February was authorised by the commanding officer of 3 Regiment Army Air Corps in his capacity as Station Commander, Soest. It was considered justified as a result of witness evidence received to the effect that stolen goods were held on the premises. This allegation was also considered pertinent to an inquiry being undertaken into offences committed at the NAAFI HQ in Soest in 1986. Nothing of evidential value was found during the search. The Royal Military police operate under the following guidelines when dealing with civilian personnel:

(a) The Manual of Military Law 1972.
(b) Queens Regulations for the Army 1975.

NAAFI personnel are subject to the same disciplinary processes as are applicable to United Kingdom based civilians and their dependants who are attached to, or are employed by, the armed forces in Germany. The provisions of the service discipline Acts apply to civilians in a modified form.

Magilligan Ranges

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement indicating which proposed developments or activities in the area of Magilligan ranges would lead to restrictions on access to Magilligan Point.

Mr. Freeman: There are no plans for further restrictions on public access to Magilligan Point.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement indicating which future planned or possible activities or developments by the Ministry of Defence and Crown forces in the area of Magilligan ranges are part of, or related to, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation programmes.

Mr. Freeman: There are no plans to develop facilities at Magilligan range for use by NATO forces.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement indicating the total acreage of land purchased by his Department over the past 30 months in the area of Magilligan ranges in County Derry.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 561 acres of land has been purchased by the Ministry of Defence over the past 30 months, in this area.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement indicating what pieces of land have been bought by his Department in the area of Magilligan ranges since July 1986.

Mr. Freeman: The only land purchase by the Ministry of Defence since July 1986 was of an area of land extending to 235 acres in the vicinity of Ballymagoland Oughtymore in August 1986.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement indicating whether his

Department is presently involved in or contemplating approaches or negotiations to purchase further lands in the area of Magilligan ranges in County Derry.

Mr. Freeman: The existing dry training area at Magilligan does not fully meet the needs of the units which have to use it. Some informal approaches have therefore been made to local landowners about the possibility of acquiring adjoining land, although there are no firm plans for an extension at present.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement indicating what proportion of Benowen beach is treated by his Department as part of its range area in Magilligan; and what are the restrictions on access to that beach.

Mr. Freeman: The 4½ miles of beach between Benowen beach Sangar and Magilligan Point Sangar are closed to the public when firing on the range is in progress. Firing takes place between 8 am and 4 pm on every day of the week. However, the beach is open to the public during a six-week period in the summer, between the last week in June and the first week of August, when the range closes down.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement indicating his Department's policy on possible tourist developments in the Magilligan-Benowen area and particularly Magilligan Point.

Mr. Freeman: The only concern of the Ministry of Defence is to ensure that any developments are compatible with defence requirements, such as range safety areas.

Leave (Equestrian Events)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent leave is granted to *(a)* officers, *(b)* warrant officers, *(c)* non-commissioned officers, and *(d)* other ranks with regard to participation in equestrian events.

Mr. Freeman: When applying for leave under normal rules, personnel are not required to state the purpose for which they wish to take leave. Special leave may exceptionally be granted to officers and other ranks in certain circumstances, for example when an individual has been selected to represent his country at a competitive sport.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Younger: On 3 March I made official visits to the British Aerospace sites at Warton and Preston, and to the Pilkington Research and Development Establishment, Latham.

Greenham Common (Vehicle Transfer)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has as to why 10 Dodge Ram support vehicles were transferred from Greenham common to Alconbury on 1 April; and to what use they will be put;

(2) what information he has as to the purpose for which United States service personnel were transferred from Greenham common to Alconbury on 1 April.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Armed Forces (Brutality)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many courts martial have been held since 1979 concerning allegations of maltreatment or brutality in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *382*]: Courts martial are held under the terms of the service discipline Acts. These make it an offence for an officer, warrant officer or non-commissioned officer to strike or otherwise ill-treat a person of inferior rank: the relevant provisions are contained in section 36A of the Naval Discipline Act 1957, section 65 of the Army Act 1955 and section 65 of the Air Force Act 1955. Numbers of courts martial convictions for offences under these sections since 1979 are as follows:

	Royal Navy and Royal Marines[1]	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
1979	—	29	3
1980	1	6	5
1981	1	8	2
1982	Nil	3	1
1983	Nil	17	1
1984	5	8	2
1985	—	15	3
1986	—	4	4

[1] Figures for 1985 and 1986 have not yet been collated.
Note: Figures for 1979 are not available.

Details of courts martial not resulting in convictions could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has held an internal inquiry concerning maltreatment and brutality in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *382*]: Internal inquiries can take a number of forms and no central records are kept of the numbers held. However, the number of cases since 1979 where inquiries have led to disciplinary proceedings and convictions under the terms of section 36A of the Naval Discipline Act 1957, section 65 of the Army Act 1955 or section 65 of the Air Force Act 1955 are as follows:

	Royal Navy and Royal Marines[1]	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
1979	—	92	4
1980	1	67	11
1981	8	59	4
1982	8	36	2
1983	15	42	2
1984	10	63	4
1985	—	62	8
1986	—	50	5

[1] Figures for 1985 and 1986 have not yet been collated.
Note: Figures are not available for 1979.

Armed Forces (Cruelty and Brutality)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence in how many cases in each of the last four years disciplinary proceedings have been taken because of unfair, cruel or brutal treatment in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. 2]: Disciplinary proceedings are brought under the terms of the service discipline Acts. These make it an offence for an officer, warrant officer or non-commissioned officer to strike or otherwise ill-treat a person of inferior rank: the relevant provisions are contained in section 36A of the Naval Discipline Act 1957, section 65 of the Army Act 1955 and section 65 of the Air Force Act 1955. Numbers of convictions following disciplinary proceedings under these sections in the last four years are as follows:

	Royal Navy and Royal Marines[1]	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
1983	15	42	2
1984	5	63	4
1985	—	62	8
1986	—	50	5

[1] Figures for 1985 and 1986 have not yet been collated.

Details of disciplinary proceedings not resulting in convictions could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Paper Mill (Irvine)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to ensure that United Kingdom companies are given their proportion of the supply of materials for the Finnish investment at Irvine.

Mr. Lang: My Department and that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who also has an interest in this matter, are taking all possible steps to ensure that United Kingdom companies win a fair proportion of the supply of materials for the paper mill currently being built at Irvine. We have secured undetakings from Caledonian Paper plc, the Finnish company concerned, that British companies are given a full and fair opportunity to bid for orders. We have ensured that Caledonian Paper is fully aware of the existence and abilities of relevant United Kingdom companies; that contacts have been facilitated between United Kingdom companies and Caledonian Paper; that Caledonian Paper regularly supplies information about its current needs; and that the United Kingdom companies concerned are made fully aware of these needs so that they may maximise their chances of success in tendering. We have also impressed on United Kingdom companies that while we are happy to provide as much assistance as possible in this form the final decision is one for the commercial judgment of Caledonian Paper.

Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the setting up of regional centres for breast cancer screening as recommended by the Forrest report;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that Tayside health board has the staff, resources and finance to carry out breast cancer screening as recommended in the Forrest report.

Mr. John MacKay: My noble Friend the Minister of State announced on 25 February that £1 million will be made available in 1987-88 to enable a start to be made in Scotland on the implementation of the Forrest report's recommendations. About 10 breast cancer centres will be required in Scotland; and we shall shortly be approaching health boards to discuss where the first two or three centres should be established.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women have been screened in total in Scotland in the past five years for breast cancer; and what percentage of the female adult population they comprise.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available.

NHS (Grampian and Tayside)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on the National Health Service in both Grampian and Tayside health boards in each year since 1980; and if he will express these figures also using a gross domestic product deflator for prices.

Mr. John McKay: The information is as follows:

Year	*Tayside*		*Grampian*	
	Gross NHS expenditure[1] *at cash prices £m*	*At 1985-86 prices as measured by GDP deflator £m*	*Gross NHS expenditure*[1] *at cash prices £m*	*At 1985-86 prices as measured by GDP deflator £m*
1980-81	119·718	163·244	110·133	150·173
1981-82	130·440	161·949	120·031	149·025
1982-83	139·313	161·275	130·279	150·817
1983-84	147·606	163·583	140·170	155·342
1984-85	156·199	165·936	150·652	160·043
1985-86	163·452	163·452	163·292	163·292

[1] Comprising expenditure on hospital and community health services, family practitioner services and capital.

Redundancies

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of times the Manpower Services Commission has been informed of redundancies taking place in numbers greater than 10 employees since 1979 in each of the four Scottish cities.

Mr. Lang: The following table shows the number of reports of redundancies involving 10 or more workers confirmed as occurring over the period January 1980 to December 1986.

Local Authority District	Number of Reports
City of Aberdeen	411
City of Dundee	316
City of Edinburgh	413
City of Glasgow	1,119

Notes:
(1) the above figures may be subject to amendment as the statistics for 1986 are still provisional;
(2) the estimates relate to Jobcentre areas located wholly or partly within the 4 local authority districts.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the change in the number of people employed in manufacturing industry in each of the four Scottish cities since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The estimated numbers of those working in manufacturing plants with over 10 employees in each of the four Scottish cities in 1979 and 1985 are shown in the table. These estimates are taken from the regional data system. No reliable information is available from this source for plants with less than 10 employees. The estimates for 1985 are provisional.

City	Employment 1979	Employment 1985
Aberdeen	20,400	17,000
Dundee	29,200	15,900
Edinburgh	38,500	31,200
Glasgow	91,800	59,800

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the victim support schemes his Department is currently assisting in Scotland; and if he will indicate the level of finance involved.

Mr. John MacKay: Grant has been paid to the Scottish Association of Victim Support Schemes since it was formed in March 1985; in the financial year 1986-87 grant offered amounted to £26,000 revenue and £1,500 capital with a further £2,000 capital being made available to upgrade computer facilities. An additional revenue grant of £15,000 has been offered to the Association for each of three years commencing in 1986-87 to assist specific projects. It is intended to offer the Association revenue grant of £38,000 for the financial year 1987-88.

School Leavers

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school leavers in *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Aberdeen, *(c)* Glasgow and *(d)* Edinburgh have never had a job since leaving school.

Mr. Lang: The table shows the number of unemployed claimant school leavers under 18 years of age in each of the specified local authority districts as at 12 February 1987.

City	Number of unemployed school leavers
City of Dundee	587
City of Aberdeen	337
City of Glasgow	4,501
City of Edinburgh	1,060

Note: An unemployed school leaver is defined as a person under 18 years of age who has not entered employment since completing full-time education.

Unemployment

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of people currently unemployed in each of the four cities in Scotland; what percentage unemployment rates these represent; and how many people have been unemployed for one year or more in each case.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested.

On 8 January, the total number of unemployed claimants and those who had been unemployed for more than one year in each of the 4 Scottish cities was as shown in the table below.

Number of unemployed claimants

Area	Total	More than one year
Aberdeen Local Authority District	12,218	2,686
Dundee Local Authority District	15,448	6,686
Edinburgh Local Authority District	28,903	11,035
Glasgow Local Authority District	78,707	39,015

Unemployment rates are not available for local authority districts.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of people unemployed in each of the four cities in terms of the primary manufacturing, services and construction sectors.

Mr. Lang: I regret that information on the number of unemployed according to the industry in which they last worked is no longer available. The industrial analysis of unemployed registrants was discontinued in May 1982.

Job Vacancies

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the number of job vacancies in each of the four Scottish cities; and what is the Scottish total of job vacancies.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested.

On 6 February 1987 the total number of job vacancies notified, and remaining unfilled, at jobcentres located within the four Scottish cities and the Scotland total as a whole was as shown in the table below.

Area	Unfilled Job Vacancies
City of Aberdeen Local Authority District	1,389
City of Dundee Local Authority District	369
City of Edinburgh Local Authority District	1,483
City of Glasgow Local Authority District	2,211
SCOTLAND	15,200

The figures provided do not represent the total number of vacancies in the economy. It is estimated that only around one-third of all vacancies nationally are notified to jobcentres.

Rates (Abolition)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with, and what advice was received from, the Data Protection Registrar in relation to the proposed abolition of rates in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: None.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what items of personal data will be collected by local government to administer the proposed abolition of rates in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Bill provides that the entry in the community charges register for each person liable to pay the personal community charge will specify his or her name, address, date of birth, and the date from which such liability begins. The Secretary of State may also prescribe other matters which are to appear on the register. Only the addresses and names appearing on the register will be available for public inspection.

Glasgow District Court

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average delay in hearing cases at Glasgow district court; and if there are any proposals to increase staff employed at the court.

Mr. Rifkind: The approximate period between pleading diet and trial diet at Glasgow district court in custody cases is three weeks; in non-custody cases the period is 31 to 32 weeks before a stipendiary magistrate and 14 weeks before a justice of the peace. The number of staff employed at the court is a matter for the district council.

Lead Piping

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many grant applications have been approved for the replacement of lead piping in the Glasgow area in each of the last four years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: The table shows the numbers of grant applications for the replacement of lead plumbing approved by Glasgow District Council.

Grant applications approved

Year	*Number of approvals*
1982	Nil
1983	1,783
1984	1,466
1985	Nil

Complete figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Education (Direct Grants)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the level of direct grants to each central institution of education in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest available information is contained in the tables.

Central government direct grant (recurrent)
Scottish central institutions 1979-80—1987-88 (£ million)

Central institutions	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*[1]	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology	3·763	5·073	5·477	7·226	8·119	8·432	[2]9·172	[2]9·999	10·642
Paisley College of Technology	3·483	4·814	5·252	6·694	7·294	7·784	[2]8·399	[2]9·076	9·443
Dundee College of Technology	2·227	3·094	3·032	4·061	4·351	4·676	[2]4·993	[2]5·536	5·756
Glasgow College of Technology[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]4·721	[2]9·897	10·337
Napier College of Commerce and Technology[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]5·944	[2]14·054	14·498
Scottish College of Textiles	0·711	0·972	1·190	1·471	1·709	2·011	1·883	[2]2·025	2·087
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art	1·515	2·028	2·100	2·608	2·798	2·897	3·028	3·180	3·337
Edinburgh College of Art	1·649	2·241	2·446	2·815	3·145	3·272	3·443	3·619	3·742
Glasgow School of Art	1·462	2·020	2·216	2·648	2·812	2·985	3·120	3·330	3·474
Queen Margaret College	1·512	2·158	2·338	2·928	3·127	3·248	3·506	3·662	3·807
Queen's College Glasgow	1·093	1·462	1·535	1·962	2·150	2·298	2·490	2·625	2·755
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	0·722	0·993	1·151	1·263	1·395	1·482	1·554	1·673	2·058
Micro Electronics Development Centre	—	—	0·144	0·207	0·271	0·316	0·318	0·346	0·418
Leith Nautical College	1·020	1·407	1·462	1·604	1·710	1·628	1·612	1·684	[4]0·645
Total	19·157	26·262	28·343	35·487	38·881	41·029	63·418	70·706	72·999

[1] The significant increase between 1981-82 and 1982-83 reflects the reduction in tuition fees paid by home students by 50 per cent.

[2] Figures include grant allocated under the Switch to Technology Programme. (£1·7 million has been earmarked for Switch Phase III in 1987-88 but not yet allocated).

[3] Napier College of Commerce and Technology and Glasgow College of Technology joined the Central Institution Sector on 1 September 1985, and the figures reflect recurrent grant from the Scottish Education Department.

[4] LNC will transfer to the local authority sector with effect from 1 August 1987.

Central Government Direct Grant (Capital)
Scottish Central Institutions 1979-80—1986-87 (£ million)

Central Institutions	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Robert Gordons Institute of Technology	0·845	0·985	1·210	2·322	2·362	2·009	[3]2·215	[3]2·982
Paisley College of Technology	0·411	[1]1·345	[1]2·233	[1]1·225	[1]0·876	[1]1·209	[3] [4]0·915	[4]1·237
Dundee College of Technology	0·492	0·431	0·534	1·009	0·953	0·443	[4]0·750	[4]0·560
Glasgow College of Technology	—	—	—	—	—	—	[3] [4]0·438	[4]0·496
Napier College of Commerce and Technology	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2] [4]0·297	[4]5·313
Scottish College of Textiles	0·158	0·553	0·791	0·101	0·345	0·178	0·050	[4]0·231
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art	0·343	0·175	0·190	0·057	0·088	0·127	0·200	0·029
Edinburgh College of Art	0·099	0·092	0·131	0·039	0·118	0·255	0·088	0·003
Glasgow School of Art	0·310	0·201	0·201	0·295	0·094	0·302	0·203	0·029
Queen Margaret College	0·360	0·296	0·763	0·663	0·253	0·121	0·215	0·015
Queen's College Glasgow	0·113	0·201	0·403	0·346	0·466	0·201	0·043	0·190
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	0·041	0·415	0·184	0·443	[1]·158	2·085	3·649	6·119
Leith Nautical College	0·273	0·144	0·059	0·015	0·010	0·020	0·009	—
TOTAL	3·445	4·838	6·699	6·513	6·723	6·950	9·072	17·204

[1] Includes capital expenditure on Microelectronics Development Centre
[2] Napier College of Commerce and Technology and Glasgow College of Technology joined the Central Institution Sector on 1 September 1985
[3] Figures include grant allocated under the Switch to Technology Programme
[4] £15·9 million, including £3·8 million under the Switch to Technology Programme is available to be allocated in 1987-88

Jedburgh Abbey

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the original budget estimate and the estimated final cost of completion of the Jedburgh abbey excavation and visitors' centre; and when he expects it to be officially open to the public.

Mr. Ancram: The original budget estimate for the Jedburgh abbey visitors' centre, the excavation and associated works was £537,000. The final cost is estimated at £582,000. I intend to open the visitors' centre officially on Monday 18 May. The abbey, with the improvements as they have been completed, has of course been open continuously to the public throughout.

NHS (Staff Shortages)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the most recent available total expenditures by each health board or agency nursing to fill staff shortages.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not held centrally.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the motorway and trunk road construction contracts with a works cost of £1 million or more which his Department intends to award in 1987-88, showing in each case the total value of the contract and the expenditure likely to be incurred in that year.

Mr. Ancram: Contracts for the following major schemes, each estimated to cost over £1 million, are expected to be let in 1987-88:

		Estimated Total Cost[1] *£ million*
A7	Middleton Bypass	1·9
A75	Castle Douglas Bypass	3·9
A75	Glenluce Bypass	3·8
A77	Balsalloch to Balcreuchan	3·8
M8	Starlaw Junction, Livingston	1·8
M80	Stepps Bypass (Advance Works)	5·1
A82	Auchendennan to Arden (Loch Lomond)	1·7
A82	Luss to Camus Nan Clais (Loch Lomond)	7·5
A830	Poinish to Lochailort	2·5
A9	Dornoch Firth Approach Roads (South)	6·0
A9	Dornoch Firth Approach Roads (North)	2·5
A9	Dunbeath Bridge	3·1
A92	East Fife Regional Road, Stage III	12·2
A92	East Fife Regional Road, Stage IV	5·1
A92	Ellon Bypass	3·7
A92	Tipperty	2·2
A94	Candy to Stonehaven	3·0

[1] Includes works, land and professional fees.

Start dates during the year, and hence likely expenditure in the year, are dependent on the completion of statutory procedures and monitoring of expenditure on schemes in progress. Depending on these factors, it might prove possible to bring some additional schemes into the programme for 1987-88.

Tourism

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those tourism-related projects in Glasgow for which the Scottish Development Agency has made grants available in each of the last five years; how many jobs have been created in each project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Development Agency has not contributed grant finance to any projects solely related to tourism in Glasgow. However the agency has made finance available to a number of projects in which tourism is one of the benefits to be derived: these include the Glasgow garden festival, the Scottish exhibition and conference centre and several projects funded under the local enterprise grants for urban projects scheme. It is not at present possible to estimate the impact of these projects on tourism employment.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of overseas tourists visiting Glasgow in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Information from the international passenger survey is as follows:

	Trips
1981	160,000
1982	180,000
1983	220,000
1984	200,000
1985	260,000

Note: The sample size for Glasgow in the international passenger survey is 600. Thus, variations from year to year may be due to sampling errors rather than any real change in visitor numbers.

The regeneration of Glasgow through various action programmes, the opening of the Burrell Collection and the Scottish exhibition and conference centre have provided an impetus to the growth of tourism. A further boost is expected next year when the garden festival will be held in Glasgow and in 1990 when Glasgow is the European city of culture.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs were created in tourism in Glasgow for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available.

Inverclyde Initiative

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect an answer to his letter dated 9 March relating to the Inverclyde initiative.

Mr. Lang replied to the hon. Member's letter on 3 April.

Housing

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dwellings in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector in (i) Scotland and (ii) Edinburgh, respectively, were classified as unfit at the latest available date.

Mr. Ancram: The classification "unfit" is not used in Scotland. The nearest equivalent classification is of houses below the tolerable standard as defined in section 14 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1974.

The table shows the BTS figures as supplied to the Department by district councils in their annual returns for 31 March 1986.

Number of BTS houses at 31 March 1986

	(i) Scotland	(ii) Edinburgh
(a) Private sector	39,001	6,041
(b) Public sector	2,234	—
(c) Not stated[1]	15,250	—
(d) Total	56,485	6,041

[1] It may be assumed that most of these cases lie in the private sector.

South of Scotland Electricity Board

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response has been made by the South of Scotland electricity board to the report on the board by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission which was published in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have received the initial response of the South of Scotland electricity board to the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission published on 20 August 1986. It gives the board's comments on the Commission's findings and describes the action it is taking to meet the recommendations. Copies of the board's response have been placed in the Library of the House.

I welcome the Commission's findings that the board is not pursuing any course of conduct against the public interest and that the board is a well run organisation managing its core function of generating, transmitting and distributing electricity efficiently and effectively. The Commission found that the board's finances are soundly run, that the management structure and information systems are satisfactory and that the board sets itself tight targets for reducing costs and improving efficiency.

The Commission drew attention to some areas where there is scope for improving performance, particularly in billing and debt collection, manpower levels and appliance retailing. The board in its response has described a number of steps being taken which should result in a significant reduction in billing costs and bad debts over the next few years. It has not accepted all of the Commission's recommendations on manpower levels but has indicated that they are reviewing and systemising a number of current procedures and have described their strategy for matching manpower requirements with work load. I shall be keeping in touch with the board's thinking as it develops. I welcome the board's confirmation of its commitment to putting appliance retailing activities on to a profitable basis. Further discussion will be required with the board about how profitablility should appropriately be measured and reported upon and the board's strategy should their endeavours prove unsuccessful.

The Commission made important recommendations about fuel purchasing and tariff structure. I welcome the positive evidence in the response of the progress being made in the board's commercial dealings with British Coal against the background of its strategy to balance the short-term advantages offered by fluctuating fuel prices with long-term security of supply. On tariffs, the board has undertaken to carry out a review and further discussion is necessary to determine the scope and objectives of this exercise. I am asking the board to keep me regularly informed about progress in this important area.

The Commission also made a number of useful recommendations on investment appraisal procedures, quality control and aspects of the arrangements for electricity trading with the CEGB which the board is taking steps to implement.

My Department will be maintaining close contact with the board on the follow-up to the report and the board will report to me again on progress achieved at the end of the year.

Nuclear Disasters

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Strathclyde police as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Hunterston *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles, *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population with (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles of the power station, *(c)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of the population of Glasgow, *(d)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high risk groups from Glasgow, *(e)* what time estimates have been made for evacuation of low mobility groups from Glasgow, and *(f)* what time estimates have been made for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Glasgow; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculation of any such time estimates to be placed in the Library;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Chapel Cross *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles, *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population with (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles of the power station, *(c)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of the population of Dumfries, *(d)* what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high risk groups from Dumfries, *(e)* what time estimates have been made for evacuation of low mobility groups from Dumfries, and *(f)* what time estimates have been made for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Dumfries; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculation of any such time estimates to be placed in the Library;

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Forestry

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the predicted average yield class of the forestry plantations established in the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness in the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *53*]: The predicted average yield class of these plantations is 12, which compares favourably with yield classes in many other parts of Scotland.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response the Forestry Commission has made to the findings regarding the internal rates of return from various forestry plantations outlined in Appendix 4 of the recent

report by the National Audit Office on Forestry Commission objectives and achievements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *53*]: The National Audit Office review of Forestry Commission objectives and achievements is being considered by the Committee of Public Accounts. It will be for the Government to respond to such recommendations as may be made by the Committee in its report to Parliament.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the average windthrow hazard class of the land in the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness approved for afforestation in the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *53*]: The estimated averge windthrow hazard classification of this area is 4-5, on a rising scale of 1-6. This is fairly typical of upland areas in other parts of Scotland.

Motoring Offences (Deaths)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many cases in each of the last 10 years, in which a driver has been charged with careless driving, a death was involved in the charge.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *53*]: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many cases of disposal of charges relating to causing death by reckless driving in each of the last 10 years the sentences have been passed in the sheriff court and the High Court respectively.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *53*]: The information requested is given in the table:

Persons against whom a charge of causing death by reckless driving was proved

Scotland

	High Court	*Sheriff Court*
1976	1	44
1977	4	39
1978	0	25
1979	1	29
1980	1	33
1981	1	24
1982	3	24
1983	2	24
1984	0	19
1985	1	27
[1]1986	2	24

[1]These figures are provisional.

"Rural Scotland"

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much it cost his Department to produce the document "Rural Scotland"; how many copies have been printed and what were their production costs; and how many he expects to be issued to the public.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *52*]: The time spent by officials of my Department in the preparation of "Rural Scotland" cannot be identified separately from their other duties. No estimate of the overall cost to my Department of producing the document can therefore be provided.

A total of 20,000 copies were printed at a cost of £12,350. Subject to demand, apart from those copies required for parliamentary, press and official use, I expect all the copies to be issued to the public.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mentally Handicapped Persons

5. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to ensure that before any hospital for the mentally handicapped is closed down full provision for care in the community is made for discharged patients.

Mrs. Currie: Mentally handicapped people should not be discharged from hospital until their needs have been assessed and arrangements have been made for those needs to be met appropriately. The closure of hospitals should be a consequence of residents being suitably accommodated in the community and not vice versa.

Cumberlege Committee

16. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to make a statement outlining Her Majesty's Government's reactions to the conclusions of the Cumberlege committee report.

Mr. Newton: The Government are currently considering the views that emerged during the consultation on the primary care and community nursing reviews, including the report of the Select Committee on Social Services, and expect to be responding to the Select Committee shortly.

Personal Pensions

17. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further proposals he has to encourage the take-up of personal pensions.

Mr. Major: The introduction of freestanding additional voluntary contributions in October and the earlier start for personal pensions in January 1988, both announced by the Government last month, have attracted great interest. We will be taking steps later this year to explain the new pensions choices and opportunities that will be available as a result of last year's Social Security Act. It will be for the personal pensions providers themselves to sell their products.

AIDS

18. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with Church leaders on the campaign to combat AIDS.

Mr. Newton: We have had several very helpful meetings and a range of other contacts with religious leaders to discuss the problem of AIDS and measures to prevent its spread. They have been both understanding and constructive and we look forward to continuing and building upon this relationship.

23. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in response to the television series on AIDS.

Mr. Newton: We are aware of only one letter received by the Department related directly to the recent

programmes produced by the television broadcasting authorities. However, we understand that research undertaken by the authorities themselves has shown a generally very favourable response.

30. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on measures proposed and being taken to prevent the spread of AIDS.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) earlier today.

46. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people died from AIDS during 1986 and in 1987 to date.

Mr. Newton: The number of deaths due to AIDS which were reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre in 1986 is 153. By 28 February 1987 another 84 AIDS cases were reported as having died.

47. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what National Health Service funds are being diverted away from existing services in order to provide care and nursing facilities for AIDS patients; what effect this will have on hospital waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Allocations to health authorities in England in 1987-88 provide for an increase of £631 million, 1·5 per cent. above forecast general inflation. This includes £25 million under the waiting list initiative, which is expected to produce about 100,000 additional operations. They will also retain the benefit of cash released through their cost improvement programmes, which are planned to achieve £150 million in the current year. The estimated cost of hospital care of patients with AIDS in England in 1987-88 is £12 million to £24 million, of which £4·4 million has been provided centrally to the three regions which together treat some 75 per cent. of cases.

Homeopathy

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision exists at present for, and what plans there are to extend, the homeopathy service on Merseyside.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry that I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not available centrally. The provision of homeopathy services on Merseyside is the responsibility of Mersey regional health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the regional chairman.

Nurses

19. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about nurses leaving National Health Service employment in order to begin private sector nursing employment.

Mr. Newton: We have not received any on this specific issue, and nurses are free to work where they choose. However, in the light of the United Kingdom Central Council's project 2000 proposals, we will be discussing with representatives of the private health care sector the ways in which its contribution to nurse training can be expanded.

20. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the most recent figure, or estimate, he has for the number of agency nurses working in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Newton: The number of agency nursing and midwifery staff employed in England at September 1985 was 4,120 in wholetime equivalent terms; about 1·0 per cent. of the total nursing and midwifery staff at that date.

24. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses are currently employed in the north-west region; and how many were employed in 1979.

Mr. Newton: The provisional figure from the latest census of nurses and midwives, including agency nurses, is 37,800 whole time equivalents. The corresponding figure for 1979 was 32,200. That is an increase of 5,600 or 17·7 per cent. It compares with an increase of 12·2 per cent. over the same period for all health authorities in England. [These figures are taken from the DHSS Annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.]

27. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to stem the flow of qualified nurses now leaving the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: Information about nurses leaving the National Health Service is not collected centrally but the latest available information shows that the number of qualified nursing and midwifery staff in the National Health Service in England continues to increase: by a further 2·8 per cent. between September 1984 and September 1985. We do however recognise that the situation will vary between location and specialty, and a number of initiatives aimed at improving recruitment and retention have been taken.

The position in London is currently the subject of a review commissioned by the National Health Service Management Board. The Department is also currently undertaking a special enquiry into nurse recruitment and retention problems across the country with the aim of identifying management action which may be required to overcome recruitment difficulties. The management and staff sides of the Nursing and Midwifery Staff negotiating council are reviewing nursing clinical grading structure and are aiming to develop a structure which is appropriate to current and future needs. A joint DHSS/NHS group is examining equal opportunities, with specific reference to management of the career break. Additionally health authorities have been asked to consider increasing male recruitment, making greater efforts to recruit mature entrants, organise "Back to Nursing" campaigns, establish nurse banks and give more opportunities for flexible working arrangements, part-time working and job sharing.

Finally, in addition to consultation on the "Project 2000" proposals on future nurse education and training published by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, the Department has set up a major feasibility study into the extended use of the youth training scheme in the National Health Service. A feature of this study, which is purely exploratory, is to look at the way such training might facilitate entry to professional nurse training and thus help to alleviate recruitment difficulties.

49. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much nurses' pay has increased in real terms since the pay review body was set up.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to point (c) of my reply to him today.

58. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current position with regard to nurses leaving the profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information about nurses leaving the profession is not collected centrally. However, we are aware of some work undertaken by the Institute of Manpower Studies which suggests that about 10 per cent. of qualified nurses and midwives leave the National Health Service each year. On that basis — that is including retirements, and including those not lost to the profession but going to undertake further post-basic training or other nursing employment—some 23,000 in wholetime equivalent terms left the National Health Service in England in the last year. At the same time, however, some 7,000 returned to nursing after a break, in addition to those newly qualified nurses who joined the National Health Service.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses have been employed within the National Health Service in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 20 March at column *661*.

Pensioners (Heating Allowance)

21. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the number of pensioners who are in receipt of a heating allowance.

Mr. Major: It is estimated that nearly 1·5 million pensioners were in receipt of a heating addition in 1984, the latest year for which information is available.

Supplementary Benefit

22. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of supplementary benefit claimants in Colne Valley constituency for the current year and for 1979.

Mr. Lyell: In February this year approximately 17,000 claimants were receiving supplementary benefit from the Huddersfield local office which serves the constituency of Colne Valley. The equivalent figure for February 1979 was 10,000.

Leicestershire District Health Authority

25. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Leicestershire district health authority regarding financial provision under the National Health Service; and what reply he has sent.

Mrs. Currie: We have not received any such representations from Leicestershire health authority. We would expect any such representations to be made to the Trent regional health authority.

Heart Disease

26. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the heart disease prevention campaign, "Look After Your Heart".

Mrs. Currie: We are planning, in association with the Health Education Authority, to launch the campaign on 22 April. The aim during the initial phase will be to increase public awareness about the main risk factors associated with coronary heart disease. The campaign will involve the support and co-operation of many sectors of society, including the National Health Service, industry and commerce, community and voluntary organisations, and the educational service. A particular feature will be community-based "healthy cities" programme which has already brought together health and local authorities in initiatives to promote heart disease prevention programmes, and will be developed further during the course of the campaign.

The national launch will be supported by a series of booklets on aspects of coronary heart disease. Six million copies have been printed for distribution direct to the public. A publication will give detailed statistics about the deaths and illness attributable to coronary heart disease and illustrate its financial consequences. Substantial coverage through the mass media, both nationally and locally, has been arranged for the early months of the campaign. An advertising campaign on television is planned for the autumn. The national campaign is intended to serve as a focus for the very many local initiatives already planned to draw the public's attention to the dangers of coronary heart disease and ways to avoid the main risks.

In the longer term the campaign's objective is to achieve a significant reduction in the very high rates of death from coronary heart disease.

Drugs (Expenditure)

28. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what percentage in real terms National Health Service expenditure on drugs has increased over the last five years.

Mr. Newton: The increase in real terms of expenditure on National Health Service drugs in England between 1980-81 and 1985-86 was 21 per cent.

Pensions

29. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he next expects to raise the level of pensions for women over the age of 60 years and men over the age of 65 years.

Mr. Major: The level of state retirement pensions was last increased from 6 April of this year. The next increase will take effect in April 1988.

37. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the year 1979 and for the most recent year for which figures are available the number of those receiving a pension by reason of age together with the single and married rates of pension payable.

Mr. Lyell: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 3 November 1986 at columns *355-57*. The numbers of people in receipt of retirement and supplementary pensions on the dates for which information is available and which are the most relevant for the years specified are as follows:

	Numbers
Retirement Pension[1]	
November 1978:	8,775,480
September 1986:	[2]9,853,540
Supplementary Pension only	
December 1978:	107,000
February 1986:	[2]94,500

The weekly rates of benefit applicable from 6 April 1987 are as follows:

	£ per week
Basic retirement pension (full-rate)	
Single	39·50
Married couple	63·25
Non-contributory pension[3]	
Single	23·75
Married couple	37·95
Supplementary pension scale rates[4]	
Single	38·65
Married couple	61·85

[1] Includes non-contributory pensions for people over 80, pensions paid to people overseas and those who receive graduated pension only.

[2] Latest dates for which information is available.

[3] Paid to those people over 80 who are not in receipt of a contributory pension or whose pension is payable at a rate lower than that of the non-contributory pension.

[4] Excludes any weekly additional requirements which might be payable.

57. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reconsider the decision to change the rule relating to the assessment of pensions from inflation to wages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We have no plans to alter the existing statutory requirement which ensures that pensions are uprated by an amount at least equivalent to the relevant percentage rise in price inflation.

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will compare the current state pension with contributions made to it by *(a)* all pensioners, *(b)* pensioners up to 70 years of age, *(c)* pensioners between 70 and 75 years of age, *(d)* pensioners between 75 and 80 years of age, *(e)* pensioners between 80 and 85 years of age, and *(f)* over 85 years of age during their working lives after allowing for (i) inflation and (ii) average rates of return on investments.

Mr. Major: National insurance contributions finance all contributory benefits; there is no separate pension contribution. The cost of pensions and other benefits is financed on a pay-as-you-go basis, and there is no actuarial relationship between the level of contributions paid during an individual's working life and the pension he or she receives. In particular, many employments were not insurable for pension purposes prior to the introduction of the national insurance scheme in 1948. The method of calculating entitlement to basic pension means that pensioners who were not in insurable employments prior to 1948 can receive full basic pension for fewer years of contribution than those who were insurable before that date. For all these reasons, I regret that it is not possible to give all the information requested.

From the week beginning 6 April 1987, the basic single person's retirement pension will be £39·50 and the married couple's pension £63·25. An addition of 25 pence a week is paid to pensioners aged 80 or more. Those who do not have title to a contributory retirement pension may be entitled to a non-contributory pension of £23·75 for a single person and £37·95 for a married couple.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in light of the coming into force of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 in November 1987, he will review the five-year age difference in eligibility for the basic state retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Sex Discrimination Act 1986 has no bearing on the question of pension age. The Government will however continue to examine ways of achieving greater equality in this area.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average basic, graduated and earnings-related retirement pension awarded to women aged 60 years and men aged 65 years respectively in each year since 1978, including the guaranteed minimum pension for contracted out employees.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *412*]: The tables show pensions in payment to women aged 60 and men aged 65 at a given date in each year. The figures thus represent awards made within the previous 12 months to those in receipt of each pension component. The average rate of notional additional component incorporates both additional pension and guaranteed minimum pension, and includes inherited entitlements.

Table 1: Women aged 60

£ per week

Date	*Average basic pension*	*Average rate of graduated pension*	*Average rate of notional additional component*
November 1978[1]	15·49	0·37	—
November 1979	17·70	0·41	0·51
November 1980	19·68	0·49	0·92
November 1981	20·85	0·55	1·56
September 1982[2]	20·22	0·56	2·04
September 1983	21·63	0·63	2·90
March 1984[3]	21·79	0·64	3·24
September 1985	24·60	0·70	4·38
September 1986	26·46	0·76	5·38

Table 2: Men aged 65

Date	*Average basic pension*	*Avercge rate of graduated pension*	*Average rate of notional additional component*
November 1978[1]	19·14	1·04	—
November 1979	23·12	1·25	0·72
November 1980	26·92	1·49	1·33
November 1981	29·39	1·66	2·19
September 1982[2]	29·32	1·68	2·90
September 1983	32·49	1·87	4·16
March 1984[3]	33·64	1·95	4·75
September 1985	35·47	2·11	6·69
September 1986	38·30	2·30	8·65

[1] Figures for women aged 60 and men aged 65 not available for 1978. These figures represent average amounts in payment to women aged 60-64 and men aged 65-69.

[2] The reduction in the average rate of basic pension payable in 1982 is attributable to a change in the composition of the retiring population. Men aged 65 at the date of the count were, on average, entitled to a slightly lower proportion of the full standard rate of basic

pension than those retiring in earlier years. Among women aged 60, a higher proportion were entitled to pension on their own contributions, but their percentage rate of entitlement was smaller. The average rate in payment was thus reduced. From 1982, the annual count ceased to be made at the end of November. The November 1981 and September 1982 figures are thus based on the same rates of benefit, since no uprating intervened.

[1] September 1984 figures not available.

Source: Retirement Pensions Biannual Enquiry.

Maternity Allowance

31. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made for publicising changes in the maternity allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on 10 March, at column *160*.

Severe Disability Premium

32. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposed level of severe disability premium.

Mr. Major: The proposal is to set it at the same level as invalid care allowance. That rate is currently £23·25; the actual rate payable from April 1988 would be determined nearer the time.

Home Visitors

33. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider issuing new guidelines for local authorities and other public and private agencies promoting home-visitor programmes for single parent families with infant age children and related similar groups.

Mrs. Currie: We intend to issue fresh guidance on the provision of day care services for pre-school children, which would include the subject of appropriate support for families in the home. The timetable for its issue is linked to the parliamentary timetable for introducing legislation on all the proposals in the White Paper "The Law on Child Care and Family Services".

Trade Unions (Meetings)

34. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with trade union representatives of employees in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to him on 23 February at column *106* and 5 March at column *673*.

Free Prescriptions

35. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to review the free availability of prescriptions or dental treatment to students or other people under the age of 19 years who are on low incomes.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans at present to change the arrangements under which young people get free prescriptions or dental treatment because of their age or educational status. We are considering the recommendations of an efficiency scrutiny which examined the arrangements for determining entitlement on the grounds of low income to exemption from or help with charges for prescriptions and dental treatment.

Health Education Authority

36. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what conditions will govern the making of statements about government health policy by members of the newly constituted Health Education Authority.

Mr. Newton: None, as far as the Government are concerned.

Hospital Beds (Utilisation)

38. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which regional health authority has the best utilisation of beds and which has the worst; and by how much those authorities have improved their performance since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Inter-regional comparisons should be treated with some caution given the differing age structure and range of provision. however, information in terms of the number of in-patient cases treated for each available bed in 1985, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, is given in the table.

In-patient cases treated per available bed, NHS hospitals

	1985	*1979*	*Percentage change 1979-1985*
Acute specialties			
Highest throughput in 1985, Oxford RHA	38·6	31·6	+22
Lowest throughput in 1985, Yorkshire RHA	34·4	27·6	+25
All specialties			
Highest throughput in 1985, Oxford RHA	23·7	18·4	+29
Lowest throughput in 1985, SW Thames RHA[1]	15·5	11·9	+30

[1] Figures are not strictly comparable because of the effects of NHS restructuring in 1982.

Social Fund

39. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish guidelines for the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Major: Draft directions and guidance were sent to interested organisations on 25 March, and I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 25 March at column *211*. The final version of the directions and guidance will be published nearer the introduction of the second phase of the social fund in April 1988.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to indicate the criteria on which budgets for local offices will be set for the social fund.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie), for Barking (Ms. Richardson) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) earlier today.

Unemployed Persons (Mortgage Interest Payments)

40. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much he expects to save by the changes in the regulations on payment of mortgage interest for the unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The estimated saving from the recent changes to the regulations on the amount included in supplementary benefit for mortgage interest for new claimants under 60 is £38 million in the year 1987-88, based on the latest available information.

Pensioners (Incomes)

41. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate his Department has made of the percentage increase in real terms of pensioners' incomes from savings since 1979.

Mr. Major: Pensioners' incomes from savings grew in real terms by 52·5 per cent. between 1979 and 1985, the latest date for which figures are available.

Note: Figures are obtained from the Family Expenditure Survey and relate to pensioner tax units i.e. single pensioners and married couples where the husband is over 65.

Disabled Persons

42. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to implement section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement about the Government's intentions in relation to sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Major: I discussed how best to proceed towards the further implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act with representatives of the local authority associations on 24 February. It was agreed that urgent discussions at official level should proceed to determine more realistic estimates of the costs of those parts of the Act which have resource implications, including sections 5, 6 and 7. I agreed to meet the associations to review progress in May.

53. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is considering further proposals to help the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Government will continue to seek opportunities to build upon their record of improved provision for disabled people. The full results of the survey of disabled people being carried out by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys are expected to be published in 1988 and will provide us with evidence relevant for a review of benefit provision for sick and disabled people.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further representations he has received on the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Major: Since my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarvon (Mr. Wigley) on 1 April at column *521* another 33 written representations have been received from organisations or individuals relating to implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Kidney Dialysis Machines

43. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many self-care kidney dialysis machines are available to National Health Service patients.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that self-care kidney dialysis is practised only in the Wessex region. For further details my hon. Friend may wish to contact the Wessex regional health authority.

NHS (Capital Investment)

44. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total of capital investment in the National Health Service in Slough since 1979-80; and what was the comparable investment in the period 1974-75 to 1978-79.

Mrs. Currie: I understand from Oxford regional health authority and East Berkshire district health authority that the total health authority capital invested in hospitals, health clinics and health centres in the town of Slough since 1979-80 was £23,486,000. The capital invested in the period 1974-75 to 1978-79 was £1,919,000. Both figures are at 1985-86 price levels and exclusive of expenditure on major medical equipment, computer equipment and ambulances.

Limited List Prescribing

45. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings have resulted to date from the operation of the limited list of medicines on prescription; and how these savings have been used.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) on 23 March at column *75*.

Pregnant Women (Questions)

48. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to change the current advice issued to liable relative officers regarding questions asked of young pregnant women.

Mr. Lyell: There are no plans to change the current instructions. We have no evidence that these instructions are not being adhered to.

Hip Operations

50. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest convenient figures for those awaiting hip operations.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. Information available centrally on in-patient waiting lists is categorised according to specialty of consultant but not according to the intended method of treatment.

Warnock Report

51. **Mr. Patrick Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the conclusions of the Warnock report.

Mr. Newton: The health departments have so far received a small number of comments about the issues on which the consultation document "Legislation on Human Infertility Services and Embryo Research" invites views by the end of June. We also continue to receive a wide range of views about research involving human embryos.

Income Support

52. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the financial implications for claimants aged under 25 years of age of the proposed income support scheme.

Mr. Major: The precise effects will not be known until the rates of income support are set later this year. Some general illustrations are shown in table 11B of the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security (Cmnd. 9691), a copy of which is in the Library.

NHS (Capital Expenditure)

54. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will report progress on the programme of capital expenditure works in the National Health Service.

Mr. Fowler: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply shortly.

Community Care

55. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those categories of public expenditure relevant to Sir Roy Griffiths' "Review of Community Care Policies".

Mrs. Currie: We expect the review to concentrate on the contribution to community care of public expenditure on health services, local authority social services and social security, but it is not precluded from considering any relevant public expenditure.

Pensioners (Electricity Expenditure)

56. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information his Department has collected on the proportion of expenditure by pensioners on the state pension which goes on electricity.

Mr. Major: The latest available information shows that pensioners' expenditure on electricity in 1985 represented 4·3 per cent. of their total average weekly expenditure.

Note: Figures are derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey and are for all pensioner income units, i.e. single pensioners and couples where the man is over 65.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers on the waiting lists for operations in the Exeter health district for each of the years 1975 to 1986.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. Information available centrally on inpatient waiting lists is categorised according to the specialty of the consultant but not according to the intended method of treatment. The available information on the numbers awaiting admission to surgical specialties is given in the table.

Exeter district health authority will receive £40,000 in 1987-88 from the first year's allocation of the hospital waiting list fund, which was announced by my right hon. Friend on 17 February. This will provide for increased day surgery to treat an extra 700 patients all of whom are at present on the waiting list.

Numbers of cases on inpatient waiting list for acute surgery in National Health Service hospitals in Exeter district health authority

Position at	*Total cases on list*
31 December 1974 [1]	3,859
31 March 1976	3,606
31 March 1977	3,165
31 March 1978	3,381
31 March 1979	3,810
31 March 1980	3,331
31 March 1981	3,329
31 March 1982	3,410
31 March 1983	4,474
31 March 1984	4,184
31 March 1985	4,084
31 March 1986	4,614

[1] Figure for March 1975 not available therefore number at 31 December 1974 given.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people on Merseyside are waiting for *(a)* hip operations, *(b)* knee joint operations, *(c)* kidney treatment and *(d)* eye operations.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. Information available centrally on in-patient waiting lists is categorised according to the specialty of the consultant but not according to the intended method of treatment. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority for the information required.

Nutrition Education

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to procure advice from outside experts in the field of nutrition education, in the light of the winding-up of the Joint Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend looks for advice in the field of nutrition from the chief medical officer's committee on the medical aspects of food policy. The joint advisory committee on nutrition education is a body established jointly by the Health Education Council and the British Nutrition Foundation. It is for the new Health Education Authority to determine the source of any professional advice it may require.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure of the Yorkshire regional health authority for the past five years on *(a)* revenue and *(b)* capital.

Mr. Newton: Following are the total expenditure figures recorded in the annual financial accounts of the Yorkshire regional health authority and those of district health authorities (area health authorities for 1981-82) within that region:

Hospital and community health services

	Revenue £ million	*Capital £ million*
1981-82	547·8	50·9
1982-83	583·4	52·6
1983-84	619·6	51·4
1984-85	657·6	51·6
1985-86	699·5	72·8

Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded although the figures for the years 1981-82 to 1984-85 include a small element representing family practitioner committees' administration expenses.

Food (Radiation Contamination)

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures are currently being taken under European Community Council Regulations to check the levels of radiation contamination of food imported into the United Kingdom; and with what results.

Mr. Newton: European Council Regulation EEC No. 1707/86 of 30 May 1986 set out maximum permitted levels of radiocaesium for imports of food into the Community on an emergency basis following the Chernobyl nuclear accident. The arrangements have been extended to 31 October 1987 by Council Regulation EEC No. 624/87 pending further scientific evaluation.

The regulation requires certification or testing of food imports from third countries. In the 10 months to March a large number of samples have been tested. All but 18 were below the levels set out in the regulation. The 18 consignments concerned have been refused entry into the United Kingdom.

I am placing a copy of the results of the monitoring in the Library.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of the annual National Health Service expenditure, in money and percentage terms, was spent on *(a)* pay and related costs, *(b)* drugs, medicines and bandages, *(c)* medical equipment, *(d)* hospital building and maintenance, *(e)* administration and *(f)* general services, catering, laundry, and so on for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The tables show the analysis of health authorities' current expenditure by function (table 1) and subjectively (that is, by type) (table 2) for 1984-85 and 1985-86. Total capital expenditure by the health authorities whose current expenditure is included in the tables was £795·4 million (1984-85) and £891·9 million (1985-86).

For the years 1979-80 to 1983-84 I refer my hon. Friend to the replies given him by my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Minister for Health, (Mr. Clarke) on 18 January 1984 at cols. *251-54* and 21 December 1984 at cols. *413-14*.

Table 1
Current expenditure by health authorities analysed by function

		1985-86		*1984-85*	
		£ million	*per cent.*	*£ million*	*per cent.*
	A. *Patient care services*				
i	Medical Staff Services	901·9	9·39	820·0	8·98
ii	Nursing Staff Services	3,284·8	34·18	3,09[illegible]·2	33·85
iii	Other Direct treatment Services and Supplies	864·8	9·00	810·2	8·87
iv	Diagnostic Departments	531·2	5·53	483·6	5·30
v	Other Medical and Para Medical Services, Ambulance Services etc	765·1	7·96	722·4	7·90
Total		6,347·8	66·06	5,928·4	64·90
	B. *General Services*				
i	Unit Administration and Clerical Support Services	575·0	5·98	542·7	5·94
ii	Medical Records	105·9	1·10	99·8	1·09
iii	Training and Education	53·3	0·55	50·5	0·55
iv	Catering	355·1	3·70	354·1	3·88
v	Domestic/Cleaning	404·0	4·20	417·6	4·57
vi	Portering	149·3	1·55	146·4	1·60
vii	Laundry	63·9	0·66	64·1	0·70
viii	Linen Services	121·2	1·26	114·8	1·26
ix	Transport	46·9	0·49	44·7	0·49
x	Engineering maintenance	270·6	2·82	262·7	2·88
xi	Energy and Utility Services	319·9	3·33	329·4	3·61
xii	Building Maintenance	165·0	1·72	167·0	1·83
xiii	Grounds and Gardens	21·8	0·23	22·3	0·24
xiv	General Estate Expenses	173·0	1·80	164·4	1·80
xv	Miscellaneous Services and Expenses	(0·4)	—	3·7	0·04
Total		2,824·5	29·39	2,784·2	30·48
	C. *Other*				
i	Headquarters Administration	374·4	3·90	361·4	3·96
ii	Other Services and Expenses	62·7	0·65	60·8	0·66

	1985-86 £ million	1985-86 per cent.	1984-85 £ million	1984-85 per cent.
Total	437·1	4·55	422·2	4·62
D. *Total*	9,609·4	100·00	9,134·8	100·00

Note: The figures are derived from the annual accounts submitted to the Department by health authorities for 1984-85 and 1985-86. They include all current expenditure except that on the family practitioner services, the expenses of the Dental Estimates Board and Prescription Pricing Authority and the costs of other special health authorities providing NHS central services.

Table 2

Current expenditure by health authorities analysed subjectively (i.e. by type)

	1985-86 £ million	1985-86 Per cent.	1984-85 £ million	1984-85 Per cent.
A. *Pay*				
NHS staff salaries and wages	7,007·8	72·93	6,697·9	73·32
Non-NHS staff (agency etc.)	105·4	1·10	78·5	0·86
Chairmens remuneration	2·2	0·02	2·0	0·02
Total	7,115·4	74·05	6,778·4	74·20
B. *Non-pay*				
Drugs	296·6	3·09	278·8	3·05
Medical gases	10·8	0·11	10·9	0·12
Dressings	51·8	0·54	50·0	0·55
Medical and surgical equipment—purchases and maintenance contracts	333·5	3·47	306·0	3·35
X-Ray equipment, film and materials—purchases and maintenance contracts	53·8	0·56	51·6	0·57
Patients' appliances	73·3	0·76	63·0	0·69
Laboratory equipment, instruments and materials—purchases, maintenance contracts and services	87·1	0·91	80·5	0·88
Provisions—purchases and contract catering	182·9	1·90	178·0	1·95
Staff uniforms and patients clothing	48·3	0·50	44·5	0·49
Fuel, light and power	294·5	3·06	139·1	1·52
Laundry—equipment, materials and contracts	13·1	0·14	12·7	0·14
Cleaning—equipment, materials and contracts	52·1	0·54	39·4	0·43
Engineering maintenance—equipment, materials and contracts	112·0	1·17	110·3	1·21
Building maintenance—equipment, materials and contracts	87·4	0·91	91·8	1·00
Grounds and gardens maintenance—equipment, materials and contracts	6·0	0·06	5·8	0·06
Computers—purchases, maintenance and licensing fees	29·2	0·30	21·9	0·24
Office equipment	28·8	0·30	31·1	0·34
Printing, stationery and postage	73·6	0·77	70·6	0·77
Telephones—rental etc. and call charges	75·6	0·79	70·2	0·77
Transport—fuel and oil, maintenance—equipment, materials and contracts etc.	57·9	0·60	53·7	0·59
Travelling, subsistence and removal expenses	163·1	1·70	152·8	1·67
Rates	147·5	1·54	137·0	1·50
Contractual arrangements for patient care	44·3	0·46	39·5	0·43
Other expenses	359·8	3·74	495·7	5·43
Total	2,683·0	27·92	2,534·9	27·75
C. *Total pay and non-pay*	9,798·4	101·97	9,313·3	101·95
Less direct credits (staff lodging charges, canteen and other sales etc.)	189·0	1·97	178·5	1·95
D. *Total*	9,609·4	100·00	9,134·8	100·00

Note.—The figures are derived from the annual accounts submitted to the Department by health authorities for 1984-85 and 1985-86. They include all current expenditure except that on the family practitioner services, the expenses of the Dental Estimates Board and Prescription Pricing Authority and the costs of other special health authorities providing NHS central services.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to restore the number of beds available in National Health Service hospitals to 1979 levels.

Mrs. Currie: No. Our main concern is people, and services and treatments provided for them, not beds. Improvements in the cost effective use of resources have enabled treatments to increase since 1979, despite bed reductions. We now (1985 figures) care for well over 6 million in-patient cases—almost 1 million more than in 1979; nearly 37½ million, that is 3½ million more, outpatient attendances and nearly 1 million, that is over ½ million more, day cases.

COMA

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give in the *Official Report* the names of the members of the working group of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy on dietary matters, together with their qualifications and interests in nutrition and dietary matters.

Mrs. Currie: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the COMA working group on very low calorie diets. Details are as follows:

CHAIRMAN:

Professor H. Keen, Professor of Human Metabolism, Unit for Metabolic Medicine, United Medical and Dental Schools of Guys and St. Thomas' Hospital, London. MBBS 1948; FRCP London 1970; MD London 1971. Medical and Scientific Secretary of Medical Research Society and British Diabetic Association. Author, 'Blood Vessel Disease in Diabetes Mellitus' 1971; 'Complications of Diabetes' 1982; Papers on Epidemiology of Diabetes, Diabetic Angiopathy, Insulin Infusion Techniques, Associated Metabolic Disorders etc.

MEMBERS:

Ms. C. Bowyer, Senior Dietician, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, St. Georges Hospital, London. State Registered Dietician. Secretary and Treasurer, Association for the Study of Obesity. Member of Dietetic Committee of Anorexic Aid. Chapters and papers on obesity, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia nervosa.

Dr. D. Craddock, General Practitioner, Croydon, Surrey. MB Chem B 1944; D Obst RCOG 1950; MD Liverpool 1967; FRCGP 1977; Hawthorne Prize, BMA 1968. Author, 'Obesity and its Management'; 'A Short Text Book on General Practice'; Chapters and papers on other medical subject.

Dr. J. S. Garrow, Director, Nutrition Research Group, Medical Research Council, Clinical Research Centre, Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow. Professor-elect Chair of Nutrition at St. Bartholomews Hospital Medical College. MB ChB 1952, MD 1957, PhD St. Andrews 1961; FRCP Ed 1976; Mem Assn Phys & Med Research Society; Chairman, Association for the Study of Obesity. Author, 'Energy Balance and Obesity in Man' 1978; 'Zero Muddler for Unprejudiced Sphygmomanometry' Lancet 1963; 'Treat Obesity Seriously' 1981.

Professor M. G. Marmot, Professor of Community Medicine, University College London and Middlesex Hospital Medical School. B Sc(Med) Sydney 1967, MBBS 1969, MPH University of California 1972, Ph D University of California 1975, MFCM 1984. Author, papers on Heart Disease Epidemiology and Social Factors in Disease and Ethnic Differences in Health.

Dr. J. F. Munro, Consultant Physican, Eastern General Hospital and Edenhall Hospital, Musselburgh, Midlothian. MB Ch B (hons) Ed 1960; FRCP Ed 1971. Author, papers on Management of Obesity, Diabetes and Bacterial Infection and Use of Antiobesity agents in Treatment of Obesity.

Professor T. Silverstone, Professor of Clinical Psychopharmacology, University of London at St. Bartholomews Hospital Medical College. MA, BM Bch 1958; DM Oxf. 1968, FRCP Lond. 1976; FRC Psych 1973. Author, Drug Treatment in Psychiatry, Editor, Drugs and Appetite 1987, papers on clinical Psychopharmacology and Human Feeding Behaviour.

NHS (Staff Accommodation)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under what authority the sale of nurses' accommodation has been carried out in the last two years; what is the current status of the relevant circular which was issued and then withdrawn in 1986; if he will publish the findings of the review then initiated; and what general objectives and precise targets he now has for the sale of nurses' accommodation in the next year.

Mr. Newton: Although the National Health Service Acts do not include a specific power to dispose of surplus land and property, Treasury counsel has advised that there is an inherent power. Circular HC(86)8 issued in 1986 advises authorities on the implementation of a previous circular, making it clear that they should not implement any part of their plans for rationalising property holdings where this involved giving staff notice to quit. Neither circular has been withdrawn. We expect shortly to consult on the outcome of the review of the conditions on which staff occupy residential accommodation initiated last year. Our general objectives for the next year are that authorities should continue to dispose of any properties they judge to be surplus to local requirements, wherever practicable by selling them to the current occupants at the generous discounts available; ensure that the remaining stock is fully utilised; and bring up to a reasonable standard any of the remaining properties which are in a poor state of repair and decoration. We have not set any precise targets within these general objectives.

Handicapped People (Respite Care)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to alter the provision of short-term respite care for the handicapped in England and Wales.

Mr. Major: We recognise the potential value to families with a handicapped member and to the handicapped person of respite or short-term care. This can be provided in the family's own home, by substitute families or in residential accommodation (often in small units in the community) run by health or local authorities or by private or voluntary organisations. It is for individual health authorities and local authorities to determine in the light of local needs and priorities the appropriate level and pattern of services within available resources. The National Institute for Social Work's working party, under the chairmanship of Lady Wagner, is currently reviewing the role of residential care (including respite care) and the range of services given in statutory and independent residential establishments and considering what changes are required to enable the residential care sector to respond more effectively to changing social needs. The working party's report is expected in early 1988.

Freefone Service

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of calls received by his Department's Freefone service during the past year.

Mr. Lyell : The Department's Freefone service dealt with 680,259 calls during the 12-month period 11 February 1986-9 February 1987.

Benefits

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost in benefits of an individual male and an individual female unemployed person in each of the past five years.

Mr. Major: Based on an analysis of unemployment benefit recipients the estimated average benefit cost of male and female unemployed beneficiaries is given in the table:

Year	Male £	Female £
1982-83	2,122	1,769
1983-84	2,270	1,910
1984-85	2,422	2,070
1985-86	2,645	2,290
1986-87	2,744	2,399

Note: The estimates cover unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit and housing benefit. They do not include other benefits that may be in payment, for example child benefit.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of supplementary benefit claimants and the total sum paid in the six Liverpool constituencies in 1979 and in the current year.

Mr. Lyell: The six Liverpool constituencies are covered, for supplementary benefit purposes, by 11 of the Department's offices; but their boundaries are not conterminous. The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from those offices on 10 February 1987, the latest date for which information is available, were 138,287 and 20 February 1979 were 90,515.

I regret that information about the total sum paid is not available.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Documents (Reproduction)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis photocopying of HN(87)13 is restricted to health authorities only.

Mrs. Currie: HN(87)13 may, in common with all health notices and circulars, be photocopied or reproduced in any other form by any of the bodies to whom it is addressed. In this instance an earlier form of copyright waiver was used in error.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under what authority health authorities and community health councils may reproduce copies of HC(87)7: Resource Assumptions and Planning Guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Reproduction of health circulars is covered by Crown copyright, as are all Government publications. As one of the aims of publishing circulars is to reach as wide an audience as possible the legal right is not enforced. To emphasise this, circulars will in future state that they may be freely reproduced by all those to whom they are addressed.

Runaways (Definition)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will redefine the term runaway, for his Department's purposes, as a young person, aged under 17 years or in local authority care, who has either left home or residential care of his or her own accord but without agreement, or who is forced to leave, and is missing for one or more nights; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department does not have a formal definition of the term runaway.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Speech Therapy (Exhibition)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to speech therapy to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 1 June 1987 to 5 June 1987.

Insulin

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements and facilities are made available to diabetic patients to enable them to store their insulin in an efficient manner; if he will make a statement on the problems faced by low income patients in maintaining the insulin in good order; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No special arrangements are necessary for storage. The shelf life of insulin at room temperature is one month. It may be stored for longer periods if kept refrigerated. Patients who keep insulin at room temperature may need to make arrangements with their doctor or pharmacist for smaller and more frequent supplies. Diabetics are exempt from prescription charges.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Rother Valley constituency claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested.

The Rother Valley constituency is covered by the Department's local offices at Rotherham north and Rotherham south, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims for maternity grant received at the two Rotherham local offices during the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Rotherham North	769
Rotherham South	2,577

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Colne Valley constituency claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested.

The Colne Valley constituency is covered by the Department's local office at Huddersfield, although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims for maternity grant received at the Huddersfield local office during the 1986 calendar year was 2,651.

Official Visits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list his official visits throughout the United Kingdom during the month of March.

Mr. Fowler: During March, I undertook the following outside engagements:

Friday 13 March — Visit to Bromsgrove hospital, Bromsgrove

Wednesday 18 March — Regional health authority Chairmen's meeting, Oxford.
Speech to Office of Health Economics 25th anniversary dinner, London

Thursday 19 March—Address to *Financial Times* pensions conference, London

Monday 23 March—Opening of conference "Future Trends in AIDS", London

Wednesday 25 March—Opening of conference "Caring for AIDS Sufferers in the Community", London

Friday 27 March — Opening of new emergency ward, Grantham hospital, Grantham

Blood Products

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the date when his Department gave instructions that all Factor VIII blood products should be heat treated.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *82*]: Manufacturers of Factor VIII initially developed heat treatment techniques to prevent the transmission of hepatitis. These techniques were found to inactivate HIV during 1984 and heat-treated Factor VIII was available for clinicians in the United Kingdom to prescribe on a named patient basis from the end of 1984.

All imported Factor VIII released for use in the United Kingdom since January 1985 has been heat-treated. From April 1985 heat-treated Factor VIII has also been produced by the blood products laboratory at Elstree.

Mr. Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to answer the question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead, 23 March, *Official Report*, column *82*, concerning heat treatment of blood products, to which a holding answer was given.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member today.

NHS (Pay Bill)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total wage and salary bill of the National Health Service for 1985-86, broken down by *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nurses and midwives, *(c)* administration and clerical, *(d)* ancillary and *(e)* other staff; what was the average pay level for each category; and what the percentage change in the average pay level from 1984-85.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is shown in the table:

Staff group	*(1) Expenditure 1985-86 Financial year £ million*	*(2) Average pay level £ thousand*	*(3) Change in average pay since 1984-85 Financial year Per cent.*
Medical and Dental	1,024	23·8	6·3
Nurses and Midwives	3,210	8·1	8·6
Administration and Clerical	773	7·5	4·7
Ancillary	902	6·5	4·7
Other staff	1,133	9·6	n.a.
Total	7,042		

Notes:

(1) Figures in column 1 are for hospital and community health services in England. They are derived from the summarised accounts of health authorities and include employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions but exclude agency staff.

(2) Figures for "other staff" in column 1 cover professions allied to medicine, professional and technical staff Whitley B, scientific and professional staff, maintenance staff and ambulance men.

(3) The figures shown in column 3 include pay increases awarded during the financial year 1985-86. In some cases these were paid in full from February 1986.

n.a. = Not appropriate.

National Health Service (Staff)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for regional health authority, SHA and district health authority in England and for each year since 1982, the numbers of staff in the following groups *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nursing and midwifery, *(c)* adminstrative and clerical, *(d)* ancillary, *(e)* other employees and *(f)* total employees in terms of: (i) the actual number of employees and (ii) whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1987, c. *331*]: The table gives the information requested for each regional health authority in England, and a total for the London Postgraduate SHAs, for each of the years 1982 to 1986 inclusive. Figures for district health authorities are not readily available in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NHS directly employed staff: 30 September 1982

Numbers and Whole-time Equivalents[1]

Region	*Medical[2] and Dental*	*Nursing[3] and Midwifery*	*Administrative and Clerical*	*Ancillary*	*Others[4]*	*Total*
1. *Northern RHA*						
Number	3,500	30,000	6,800	14,400	8,000	62,600
Whole time equivalents	2,700	26,400	6,100	11,400	7,500	54,000

Region	Medical[1] and Dental	Nursing[2] and Midwifery	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary	Others[4]	Total
2. *Yorkshire RHA*						
Number	3,900	34,300	8,300	17,600	9,800	73,900
Whole time equivalents	3,000	30,000	7,100	13,300	8,600	62,000
3. *Trent RHA*						
Number	4,400	40,400	10,500	22,500	11,300	89,000
Whole time equivalents	3,500	35,400	9,000	16,600	10,200	74,700
4. *East Anglian RHA*						
Number	2,000	16,600	4,500	7,900	4,900	35,900
Whole time equivalents	1,500	14,400	3,900	6,000	4,200	30,000
5. *North West Thames RHA*						
Number	4,400	34,000	10,000	15,200	8,400	72,000
Whole time equivalents	3,300	29,100	8,500	12,400	7,100	60,400
6. *North East Thames RHA*						
Number	5,300	39,500	11,800	19,600	10,600	86,700
Whole time equivalents	4,100	35,100	10,100	16,000	9,500	74,800
7. *South East Thames RHA*						
Number	4,500	37,300	11,400	18,700	10,000	81,900
Whole time equivalents	3,400	31,600	9,400	15,000	8,600	67,800
8. *South West Thames RHA*						
Number	3,400	29,100	7,900	13,200	7,400	61,000
Whole time equivalents	2,500	25,000	6,500	10,500	6,200	50,700
9. *Wessex RHA*						
Number	2,900	25,400	6,600	11,800	6,700	53,400
Whole time equivalents	2,100	21,600	5,500	8,700	5,800	43,800
10. *Oxford RHA*						
Number	2,700	19,700	5,900	8,000	5,700	42,000
Whole time equivalents	1,800	16,700	4,700	6,300	4,700	34,200
11. *South Western RHA*						
Number	3,400	31,400	8,200	14,000	8,600	65,600
Whole time equivalents	2,600	26,100	6,800	10,600	7,500	53,600
12. *West Midlands RHA*						
Number	5,600	47,100	12,700	22,500	13,200	101,200
Whole time equivalents	4,200	41,100	10,800	16,800	11,800	84,700
13. *Mersey RHA*						
Number	2,800	25,600	6,300	12,600	6,700	53,900
Whole time equivalents	2,200	22,500	5,300	9,400	5,900	45,200
14. *North Western RHA*						
Number	4,900	42,200	11,600	19,300	11,700	89,600
Whole time equivalents	3,800	37,000	9,800	14,900	10,600	76,200
20. *London PG SHAs*						
Number	1,600	5,800	2,000	2,800	2,000	14,200
Whole time equivalents	1,000	5,200	1,800	2,400	1,900	12,300
England total[5]						
Number	55,300	458,200	128,400	220,200	127,600	989,600
Whole time equivalents	41,500	397,100	108,800	170,500	112,700	830,600

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100 (numbers and whole-time equivalents).

[2] Includes permanent (whole-time, part-time and honorary) staff and locums.

[3] Includes agency staff.

[4] Includes Professional and technical, professions allied to medicine, scientists, works, maintenance and ambulance staff.

[5] Includes London Ambulance Service, Dental estimates board and Prescription Pricing Authority staff.

NHS directly employed staff: 30 September 1983

Numbers and Whole-time Equivalents[1]

Region	Medical[1] and Dental	Nursing[2] and Midwifery	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary	Others[4]	Total
1. *Northern RHA*						
Number	3,700	30,500	6,900	14,200	8,000	63,300
Whole time equivalents	2,800	26,800	6,200	11,200	7,500	54,50
2. *Yorkshire RHA*						
Number	3,900	34,200	8,300	17,400	9,800	73,600
Whole time equivalents	3,000	29,800	7,100	13,100	8,600	61,700
3. *Trent RHA*						
Number	4,500	40,300	10,500	22,000	11,500	88,900
Whole time equivalents	3,600	35,200	9,000	16,200	10,400	74,400
4. *East Anglian RHA*						
Number	2,000	16,800	4,700	8,000	5,000	36,600
Whole time equivalents	1,500	14,500	4,100	6,000	4,300	30,500
5. *North West Thames RHA*						
Number	4,500	33,100	10,100	14,800	8,400	70,900
Whole time equivalents	3,300	28,700	8,500	12,100	7,200	59,700
6. *North East Thames RHA*						
Number	5,300	40,100	11,800	18,800	10,500	86,500

Region	Medical[2] and Dental	Nursing[3] and Midwifery	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary	Others[4]	Total
Whole time equivalents	4,000	35,200	10,200	15,400	9,500	74,400
7. *South East Thames RHA*						
Number	4,700	37,000	11,400	18,000	10,000	81,100
Whole time equivalents	3,500	31,500	9,400	14,500	8,600	67,400
8. *South West Thames RHA*						
Number	3,400	29,500	8,100	12,800	7,600	61,300
Whole time equivalents	2,500	25,200	6,600	10,200	6,300	50,800
9. *Wessex RHA*						
Number	2,800	26,000	6,800	11,700	6,800	54,100
Whole time equivalents	2,000	22,000	5,600	8,600	5,900	44,200
10. *Oxford RHA*						
Number	2,700	19,700	5,900	7,900	5,700	41,800
Whole time equivalents	1,900	16,600	4,700	6,100	4,700	34,000
11. *South Western RHA*						
Number	3,500	30,800	8,300	13,700	8,700	64,900
Whole time equivalents	2,600	26,100	6,900	10,300	7,500	53,400
12. *West Midlands RHA*						
Number	5,700	46,800	13,100	22,100	13,500	101,200
Whole time equivalents	4,200	40,800	11,100	16,500	12,000	84,600
13. *Mersey RHA*						
Number	2,800	25,600	6,300	12,100	6,700	53,500
Whole time equivalents	2,200	22,300	5,300	8,900	6,000	44,800
14. *North Western RHA*						
Number	5,000	42,400	11,600	18,900	11,900	89,800
Whole time equivalents	3,900	37,100	9,800	14,600	10,900	76,300
20. *London PG SHAs*						
Number	1,600	5,500	2,000	2,800	2,100	14,000
Whole time equivalents	1,000	5,200	1,900	2,400	1,900	12,400
England total[5]						
Number	56,100	458,300	129,600	215,300	128,800	988,000
Whole time equivalents	42,300	397,100	110,000	166,200	113,900	829,400

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100 (numbers and whole-time equivalents).

[2] Includes permanent (whole-time, part-time and honorary) staff and locums.

[3] Includes agency staff.

[4] Includes Professional and technical, professions allied to medicine, scientists, works, maintenance and ambulance staff.

[5] Includes London Ambulance Service, Dental estimates board and Prescription Pricing Authority staff.

NHS directly employed staff: 30 September 1984

Numbers and Whole-time Equivalents[1]

Region	Medical[2] and Dental	Nursing[3] and Midwifery	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary[4]	Others[4,5]	Total
1. *Northern RHA*						
Number	3,600	30,600	7,100	13,600	8,200	63,000
Whole time equivalents	2,800	26,700	6,300	10,700	7,700	54,200
2. *Yorkshire RHA*						
Number	3,500	34,300	8,500	16,200	10,200	72,800
Whole time equivalents	2,700	29,900	7,300	12,100	9,000	61,000
3. *Trent RHA*						
Number	4,600	40,700	10,900	20,700	12,000	88,800
Whole time equivalants	3,700	35,500	9,300	14,900	11,000	74,500
4. *East Anglian RHA*						
Number	2,000	17,500	4,800	7,500	5,200	37,000
Whole time equivalents	1,500	15,000	4,100	5,500	4,500	30,700
5. *North West Thames RHA*						
Number	4,400	33,600	10,100	13,600	8,500	70,100
Whole time equivalents	3,300	28,700	8,400	11,000	7,200	58,600
6. *North East Thames RHA*						
Number	5,300	41,000	11,600	16,900	10,900	85,700
Whole time equivalents	4,100	35,300	10,100	13,900	9,800	73,100
7. *South East Thames RHA*						
Number	4,800	37,100	11,200	15,700	10,300	79,100
Whole time equivalents	3,500	31,100	9,300	12,500	8,900	65,300
8. *South West Thames RHA*						
Number	3,400	29,500	7,800	11,400	7,500	59,600
Whole time equivalents	2,500	24,900	6,400	9,000	6,300	49,100
9. *Wessex RHA*						
Number	3,000	26,300	6,900	11,100	7,000	54,300
Whole time equivalents	2,200	22,300	5,700	8,000	6,200	44,300
10. *Oxford RHA*						
Number	2,800	20,200	6,100	7,400	5,900	42,400
Whole time equivalents	1,900	17,000	4,900	5,700	5,000	34,500
11. *South Western RHA*						

Region	Medical[2] and Dental	Nursing[3] and Midwifery	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary[4]	Others[4,5]	Total
Number	3,500	31,000	8,200	12,800	8,800	64,300
Whole time equivalents	2,600	26,200	6,800	9,500	7,700	52,800
12. *West Midlands RHA*						
Number	5,600	47,200	13,100	20,700	13,800	100,500
Whole time equivalents	4,300	41,000	11,200	15,200	12,300	84,000
13. *Mersey RHA*						
Number	2,800	25,300	6,400	11,300	6,900	52,700
Whole time equivalents	2,200	21,900	5,400	8,200	6,200	44,000
14. *North Western RHA*						
Number	5,000	42,800	11,500	17,600	11,800	88,700
Whole time equivalents	3,900	37,300	9,700	13,600	10,800	75,400
20. *London PG SHAs*						
Number	1,600	5,300	1,900	2,400	2,000	13,200
Whole time equivalents	1,100	4,900	1,700	2,100	1,800	11,600
England total[5]						
Number	56,100	462,400	130,100	199,000	131,400	978,800
Whole time equivalents	42,300	397,500	110,300	152,200	117,000	819,300

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100 (numbers and whole-time equivalents).

[2] Includes permanent (whole-time, part-time and honorary) staff and locums.

[3] Includes agency staff.

[4] Includes Professional and technical, professions allied to medicine, scientists, works, maintenance and ambulance staff.

[5] Includes London Ambulance Service, Dental estimates board and Prescription Pricing Authority staff.

[6] Not adjusted for transfer of Operating Department Assistants from Ancillary to Professional and Technical staff group on 1 April 1984.

NHS directly employed staff: 30 September 1985

Numbers and Whole-time Equivalents[1]

Region	Medical and Dental[2]	Nursing and Midwifery[3]	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary[4]	Others[4,5]	Total
1. *Northern RHA*						
Number	3,700	31,000	6,900	13,000	8,200	62,900
Whole time equivalents	2,800	27,100	6,100	10,000	7,700	53,800
2. *Yorkshire RHA*						
Number	3,900	34,800	8,300	15,400	10,400	72,600
Whole time equivalents	2,900	30,200	7,000	11,300	9,200	60,600
3. *Trent RHA*						
Number	4,700	42,000	10,600	19,700	12,400	89,400
Whole time equivalents	3,800	36,700	9,000	14,000	11,300	74,800
4. *East Anglian RHA*						
Number	2,100	18,300	4,700	6,600	5,300	37,100
Whole time equivalents	1,600	15,500	4,000	4,900	4,600	30,600
5. *North West Thames RHA*						
Number	4,500	33,800	9,500	11,900	8,500	68,100
Whole time equivalents	3,400	28,500	7,800	9,600	7,300	56,500
6. *North East Thames RHA*						
Number	5,500	41,500	11,400	15,500	10,800	84,700
Whole time equivalents	4,200	34,600	9,800	12,600	9,700	70,800
7. *South East Thames RHA*						
Number	4,600	37,200	10,900	14,300	10,200	77,200
Whole time equivalents	3,500	30,800	8,900	11,400	8,900	63,400
8. *South West Thames RHA*						
Number	3,500	29,600	7,400	9,500	7,500	57,600
Whole time equivalents	2,500	24,700	6,000	7,600	6,400	47,200
9. *Wessex RHA*						
Number	3,000	26,800	6,600	10,500	7,100	54,000
Whole time equivalents	2,100	22,800	5,400	7,600	6,300	44,200
10. *Oxford RHA*						
Number	2,900	20,300	5,900	6,500	6,000	41,600
Whole time equivalents	2,000	16,900	4,700	5,000	5,100	33,600
11. *South Western RHA*						
Number	3,500	31,700	8,100	11,900	9,000	64,200
Whole time equivalents	2,600	26,700	6,700	8,800	7,800	52,600
12. *West Midlands RHA*						
Number	5,700	48,600	13,000	19,900	14,000	101,200
Whole time equivalents	4,400	42,100	11,000	14,400	12,600	84,400
13. *Mersey RHA*						
Number	2,900	25,800	6,300	10,600	6,900	52,500
Whole time equivalents	2,300	22,200	5,300	7,600	6,200	43,600
14. *North Western RHA*						
Number	4,900	43,200	11,100	16,800	11,900	88,000
Whole time equivalents	3,900	37,700	9,400	12,800	10,900	74,700
20. *London PG SHAs*						
Number	1,600	5,600	6,700	2,100	2,300	18,000
Whole time equivalents	1,000	5,000	6,300	1,800	1,900	16,000

Region	Medical and Dental[2]	Nursing and Midwifery[3]	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary[6]	Others[4,6]	Total
England total[5]						
Number	57,000	470,300	131,300	184,200	132,800	975,500
Whole time equivalents	43,000	401,200	111,000	139,400	118,300	812,900

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.
[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100 (numbers and whole-time equivalents).
[2] Includes permanent (whole-time, part-time and honorary) staff and locums.
[3] Includes agency staff.
[4] Includes professional and technical, professions allied to medicine, scientists, works, maintenance and ambulance staff.
[5] Includes London Ambulance Service, Dental Estimates Board and Prescription Pricing Authority staff.
[6] Not adjusted for transfer of Operating Department Assistants from Ancillary to Professional and Technical staff group on 1 April 1984.

NHS directly employed staff: 30 September 1986
(Provisional)

Numbers and Whole-time Equivalents[1]

Region	Medical[2] and Dental	Nursing[3] and Midwifery	Administrative and Clerical	Ancillary[6]	Others[4,6]	Total
1. *Northern RHA*						
Number	3,700	29,100	7,100	12,500	10,400	62,800
Whole time equivalents	2,800	27,300	6,300	9,200	7,800	53,500
2. *Yorkshire RHA*						
Number	4,000	n.a.	8,300	13,900	n.a.	n.a.
Whole time equivalents	3,000	30,300	7,000	9,900	9,400	59,600
3. *Trent RHA*						
Number	4,700	42,600	10,500	18,700	12,600	89,100
Whole time equivalents	3,800	37,100	8,900	13,000	11,500	74,300
4. *East Anglian RHA*						
Number	2,100	18,700	4,800	6,100	5,500	37,200
Whole time equivalents	1,600	15,600	4,000	4,500	4,800	30,500
5. *North West Thames RHA*						
Number	4,400	33,700	9,500	9,700	8,400	65,700
Whole time equivalents	3,300	28,700	7,700	7,800	7,300	54,800
6. *North East Thames RHA*						
Number	5,400	35,700	11,400	13,600	10,800	76,900
Whole time equivalents	4,200	34,100	9,800	11,100	9,700	68,800
7. *South East Thames RHA*						
Number	4,700	36,300	11,000	12,800	10,100	74,900
Whole time equivalents	3,500	30,200	8,900	10,100	8,900	61,600
8. *South West Thames RHA*						
Number	3,500	29,500	7,400	8,100	7,600	56,000
Whole time equivalents	2,500	24,400	5,900	6,400	6,400	45,700
9. *Wessex RHA*						
Number	2,900	27,300	6,600	9,400	7,200	53,300
Whole time equivalents	2,100	23,100	5,400	6,600	6,300	43,500
10. *Oxford RHA*						
Number	2,900	20,500	5,900	6,000	6,000	41,300
Whole time equivalents	2,000	16,900	4,700	4,500	5,100	33,200
11. *South Western RHA*						
Number	3,600	32,200	8,200	11,200	9,100	64,300
Whole time equivalents	2,600	27,000	6,700	8,100	8,000	52,400
12. *West Midlands RHA*						
Number	5,800	49,400	13,400	18,700	14,300	101,600
Whole time equivalents	4,400	42,500	11,300	13,200	12,800	84,200
13. *Mersey RHA*						
Number	2,800	26,200	6,300	9,600	7,000	52,000
Whole time equivalents	2,200	22,300	5,300	6,700	6,300	42,900
14. *North Western RHA*						
Number	5,100	43,500	11,400	15,500	11,700	87,100
Whole time equivalents	4,000	37,800	9,600	11,600	11,000	74,100
20. *London PG SHAs*						
Number	1,700	4,800	1,800	1,500	1,800	11,600
Whole time equivalents	1,200	4,800	1,700	1,500	1,800	10,900
England Total[5]						
Number	57,300	n.a.	226,000	167,300	n.a.	n.a.
Whole time equivalents	43,300	402,100	111,400	124,300	120,000	801,000

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.
[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100 (numbers and whole-time equivalents).
[2] Includes permanent (whole-time, part-time and honorary) staff and locums.
[3] Includes agency staff.
[4] Includes Professional and technical, professions allied to medicine, scientists, works, maintenance and ambulance staff.
[5] Includes London Ambulance Service, Dental estimates board and Prescription Pricing Authority staff.
[6] Not adjusted for transfer of Operating Department Assistants from Ancillary to Professional and Technical staff group on 1 April 1984.
n.a. = not available.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much nurses pay has increased in real terms *(a)* between the implementation of the Halsbury award in 1974 and May 1979, *(b)* since May 1979 and *(c)* since the establishment of the pay review body in 1984.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *260*]: The information is as follows:—

a. Between 1974 and 1979 nurses' pay fell by 21 per cent. in real terms;

b. Since 1979 nurses' pay has increased by 23 per cent. in real terms; and

c. Since 1983 nurses' pay has increased by 10 per cent.in real terms.

The percentage real increase reflects the percentage cash increase for the pay round year (1 August to 31 July) deflated by the RPI increase in the pay round year in the 12 months to July.

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the gross pay of staff nurses and ward sisters was in *(a)* 1974 after the implementation of the Halsbury award *(b)* May 1979, *(c)* in 1984 prior to the establishment of the pay review body and *(d)* following the 1986 pay award.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *260*]: Information in the form requested is not available. The basic salary scales for staff nurses and ward sisters at the dates requested are given in the following table. Staff in these grades are eligible for additional payments mainly for working overtime and unsocial hours. Currently average earnings (excluding London weighting) of full-time staff nurses and ward sisters are estimated to be about 17 per cent. and 14 per cent. respectively greater than basic pay.

Grade	*Basic Salary Scales as at:—*			
	May 1974 (a) £	*May 1979 (b)* £	*March 1984 (c)* £	*July 1986 (d)* £
Staff Nurse				
(a) Min	1,692	3,150	4,998	6,475
(b) Max	2,202	3,813	6,094	7,750
Ward Sister (Nursing Sister II)				
(a) Min	2,262	3,888	6,321	8,070
(b) Max	3,000	4,949	8,163	10,800

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much the pay of *(a)* consultants, *(b)* house officers and *(c)* general practitioners, has increased in real terms (i) between February 1974 and May 1979 and (ii) since May 1979.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *260*]: Based on the rates of pay effective on the dates specified, the changes in doctors' pay in real terms were:—

	February 1974 to May 1979 per cent.	*May 1979 to March 1987 per cent.*
House Officer	+13·6	+24·5
Consultant	−19·5	+19·2
General Practitioner (intended net remuneration)	−10·5	+17·0

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the present pay scales for National Health Service nursing officers, ward sisters and radiographers.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *305*]: The current basic salary scales for senior nurses 6-8, ward sisters and radiographers are given in the following table.

Salary scales as from 1 July 1986

Grade	*Salary scales*	
	Minimum £	*Maximum* £
Senior Nurses[1]		
6	10,880	12,480
7	9,765	12,190
8	9,350	11,300
Ward Sister		
Nursing Sister II	8,070	10,800
Radiographers		
Superintendent I	13,195	14,560
Superintendent II	11,935	13,195
Superintendent III	11,020	11,935
Superintendent IV	9,625	11,020
Senior I	9,625	11,020
Senior II	8,045	9,625
Radiographer	6,695	8,045
Teaching Grades		
Principal 24+	15,470	16,835
Principal I	14,105	15,470
Principal II	13,195	14,560
Senior Teacher	12,775	14,105
Teacher	11,935	13,195
Student Teacher	7,025	8,045

[1] Senior Nurses in pay grades 6-8 equivalent to obsolete grades of Senior Nursing Officer and Nursing Officer.

Nurses (Pay)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what assessment he has made of the financial position of nurses in the National Health Service, with particular regard to their ability at current pay levels, to obtain suitable accommodation; what representations he has received on this subject from nurses in Berkshire; what discussions he has had with the nurses and midwives negotiating bodies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will expedite his consideration of the recommendation of the review body on nurses' pay; if he will make it his policy, in reaching his conclusions on those recommendations, to allow health authorities sufficient flexibility to enable them to implement a higher pay increase in areas where recruitment and retention is especially difficult; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *306-7*]: Although we are aware of suggestions that housing costs are affecting the ability of some health authorities in parts of London and the home counties to fill key nursing posts, we have not received any representations on this issue from nurses in Berkshire, or from the staff side of the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council. The review body reports to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not expect me to anticipate its recommendations or the Government's response to them.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 8 April 1987

THE ARTS

Patent Information

Mr. Sims asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has any plans to review the dissemination of patent information.

Mr. Luce: An efficiency scrutiny is being undertaken jointly by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Office of Arts and Libraries and the British Library to review existing arrangements for the dissemination of patent information in the United Kingdom and for the exchange of British and overseas patent documentation.

Libraries (Damage)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister for the Arts if the British Library has completed its assessment of the damage to its collections inflicted by Miss Norma Hague and discovered in 1984.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *291*]: The British Library has completed its assessment. I understand that all the property for which there was conclusive evidence of theft by Miss Hague was subsequently recovered.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list the individual and total value of the damage inflicted by Miss Norma Hague on the collections of *(a)* the British Library, *(b)* the Birmingham public library and *(c)* the Liverpool public library, including in each case the token value mentioned as their share of the damage on the charge when Miss Hague pleaded guilty and was convicted in November 1984.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *291*]: Miss Norma Hague was convicted in 1984 of stealing property to an estimated value of £21,847 from these libraries. The individual values were £12,847 for Liverpool city libraries, £5,000 for the city of Birmingham public libraries, and £4,000 for the British Library. A considerable proportion of the stolen property was subsequently recovered. I understand that there is no conclusive evidence that further damage was inflicted by Miss Hague beyond the amounts with which she was charged.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Zircon

40. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what is the amount of the additional costs falling on the Crown Office to date of inquiries in relation to the Zircon affair.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Almost all the additional costs falling on the Crown Office to date of the inquiries in question have been those caused by parliamentary interest in the matter. It is not, however, possible to quantify the costs involved.

Scottish Law Commission

41. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make a statement on the work of the Scottish Law Commission.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In the period from 1980 to date the Scottish Law Commission has produced 27 reports on its law reform projects. Legislation has been passed or introduced to implement, wholly or partially, 21 of these reports. Two of these reports did not require legislation and the remaining reports are under consideration.

Procurators Fiscal

42. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will give details of plans to increase the work load of procurators fiscal.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The work load of procurators fiscal is dictated by the number of reports received from the police and other agencies and will vary from office to office. Case tracking computers have been installed in the two biggest offices, Glasgow and Edinburgh, which will deal more efficiently and effectively with the work load of these offices.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been awarded in grants by the Science and Engineering Research Council to *(a)* education institutions and *(b)* others in Yorkshire and Humberside in each year since 1979; how much the council will disburse in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

SERC research grants to education institutions and others

Financial year	*Amount £ million (Cash)*
1979-80	43·3
1980-81	56·2
1981-82	62·3
1982-83	67·6
1983-84	70·4
1984-85	78·8
1985-86	87·0
1986-87	[1]98·4
1987-88	[2]103·7

[1] Provisional outturn
[2] Estimates

The Science and Engineering Research Council's total grant-in-aid from the science budget in 1987-88 is £350 million. SERC's overall allocation is determined by my right hon. Friend in the light of advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. The SERC is primarily responsible for deciding priorities within its overall allocation.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much grant has been paid to

the Science and Engineering Research Council in cash and real terms in each year since 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

Grant-in-aid to science and engineering research council

£'000

	Cash terms	*Real terms (at 1986-87 prices)*
1975-76	106,277	294,610
1976-77	125,243	306,735
1977-78	136,765	294,088
1978-79	153,308	297,871
1979-80	175,466	291,731
1980-81	201,377	282,229
1981-82	216,720	276,463
1982-83	234,806	279,337
1983-84	254,278	289,505
1984-85	277,866	303,383
1985-86	298,534	307,490
1986-87	316,187	316,187
1987-88	350,252	335,169

The amount of grant-in-aid allocated to the Science and Engineering Research Council is decided by my right hon. Friend on the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Further Education (Examinations)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of full-time students in non-advanced further education are pursuing GCSE or GCE-O, A-level courses.

Mrs. Rumbold: In November 1985, 25 per cent. of full-time and sandwich students in non-advanced further education were enrolled on GCE O and A-level courses.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The financial managememt initiative covers a wide range of management reforms to improve management in central Government in support of the Government's commitment to improve value for money. In my Department it has given added impetus to work which had already begun and has also led to new initiatives.

The introduction of the FMI has encouraged the further development of performance indicators and output measures for individual programmes and policies. It has also led to the creation of a financial information system covering the Department's running costs. These and other initiatives, such as a new coherent top management system and improved financial management training, have encouraged a greater awareness among managers at all levls of the need for good financial management, both in the Department's own spending and in the spending of those bodies for which it has responsibility within the Government.

The effect can be seen over a range of the Department's work. Examples include the targets and performance indicators contained in the Department's chapter in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm.56), and the chapter on quality and efficiency in the recent White Paper on higher education (Cm.114). Control of the Department's own running costs has been delegated to four cost centre managers.

School Building Projects

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total national financial provision for school building projects in the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in the form requested. The Government's expenditure plans have included the following provision for schools in England.

£ million

	[1]*1986-87*	[2]*1987-88*	[2]*1988-89*
Central Government:			
Building grants to voluntary and special schools[3]	46	54	50
Local authority capital:			
Schools[4]	217	299	290

[1] Cmnd. 9702.
[2] Cm. 56.
[3] Includes repairs-maintenance, purchase of sites and buildings and building work.
[4] Includes building work and purchase of sites, furniture and equipment. Provision is net of in-year receipts.

Schools in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Higher Education

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what has been the total number of home full-time and sandwich students in higher education in each year since 1979;

(2) what has been the total full-time equivalent number of part-time students in higher education in each year since 1979;

(3) what has been the total number of home full-time entrants to universities in each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is shown in the following table:

Thousands

Academic year beginning in	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Great Britain							
Home/full-time initial entrants							
University	74·7	76·4	74·0	71·6	69·2	70·5	70·3
All initial entrants	142·0	146·3	155·9	160·9	160·7	163·2	164·6
Home full-time students							
Higher education	451·2	465·5	488·9	504·9	517·9	524·9	531·0

Academic year beginning in	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
FTE[1] of part-time students Higher Education	93·8	[2]100·9	[2]104·0	[2]105·9	[2]109·1	[2]109·1	114·0

[1] Conversion factors vary in the different sectors and for different levels of course. An illustrative average factor of 35 per cent. has been used for all part-time students.
[2] Including about 1,000 non-advanced full-time equivalents in Scotland. The figures are to be revised.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, on the basis of the revised projections of future higher education student numbers announced in the White Paper, "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge", what he estimates average unit costs in 1986-87 prices will be in 1988-89 for the universities, for the polytechnics and local authority colleges and for the voluntary and grant-aided colleges.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Unit costs in 1988-89 will depend on various decisions still to be taken by the institutions in recruiting students, by the Government in the annual public expenditure survey, and by local authorities and others in providing additional income. However, it is worth noting that against the 2·1 per cent. increase in student numbers between 1986-87 and 1988-89 adopted as the planning target in the recent White Paper, current plans for centrally provided or determined recurrent funding allow for an increase, at 1986-87 prices, over the same period of 6 per cent. for universities, 7 per cent. for local authority polytechnics and colleges, and 2 per cent. for voluntary and other grant-aided colleges.

School Meals Supervisory Assistants

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what national agreements exist regarding the rates of pay to be paid to school meals supervisory assistants.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that the latest manual workers pay settlement was agreed by the National Joint Council of Local Authority Services (Manual Workers) in October 1986.

Career Education and Guidance

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what improvements are being made in the provision of career education and guidance.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following from the White Paper "Working Together", I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment and Wales and myself today launched a new initiative designed to improve the effectiveness of the provision of career education and guidance. A copy of the booklet "Working Together for a Better Future" has been placed in the Library.

ENERGY

Community Insulation Projects

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements will be made to the fuel community insulation projects in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: At present the Department of Health and Social Security makes single payments to recipients of supplementary benefit for the cost of materials to draughtproof their homes. The work of draughtproofing is normally undertaken by community insulation projects, under the auspices of NEA, and carried out by long-term unemployed people on the Manpower Services Commission's community programme. There are now 384 of these projects, and over 300,000 homes have already been insulated under this programme, to which the Manpower Services Commission, DHSS, the DOE and my Department have all contributed.

I have drawn hon. Members' attention to the success of this programme because in many of their constituencies it is helping the old to keep warm and providing the younger with worthwhile jobs, as well as improving the energy efficiency of the 300,000 homes.

Present arrangements for single payments for draughtproofing will end in April 1988 as part of the social security reforms. The Government have, however, made clear their commitment to continue help with the cost of draughtproofing materials where it is needed. The Departments supporting this programme have therefore been considering how this can best be done.

My right hon. Friends and I have now decided that in the long term the right solution will be to extend the home improvement grant scheme to include the cost of draughtproofing materials within a revised system. The new arrangements for the home improvement grant scheme will not, however, be in place before the social security changes.

As an interim measure, therefore, the Government have decided that from April 1988 help with the cost of draughtproofing materials will be provided through the Manpower Services Commission. The commission will be well placed to undertake this task because of its responsibility for operating the community programme through which the actual work of draughtproofing is now done. It will operate a scheme in consultation with my Department and others with an interest.

Eligibility for the scheme will be widened in April 1988 to include all households in receipt of income support, housing benefit or family credit. This means an increase in eligible households from under 3 million to about 7 million. A small contribution will be sought from householders benefiting from the scheme, but this will amount to no more than about 3 per cent. of the cost of the draughtproofing service provided.

As a result of these decisions the future of the community insulation projects is now assured. We estimate that Government support for them in 1988-89 will be worth some £55 million to £60 million, of which £14·5 million will be for draughtproofing materials alone. This would represent an increase of 80 per cent. on 1986-87 and nearly 30 per cent. on 1987-88. Discussions will now be taking place with NEA and other organisations

involved in draughtproofing work in order to finalise the administrative arrangements which will come into force from April 1988.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions on Afghanistan during his recent visit to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend made clear to Mr. Shevardnadze, as did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Mr. Gorbachev, that we would support a neutral and non-aligned Afghanistan, but that this could emerge only by early Soviet withdrawal and the creation of conditions enabling the Afghan people freely to decide their own future.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Eggar: The FCO response to the financial management initiative involves a wide range of management reforms which have built on work already being done by the FCO to improve management and value for money. The precise effects of the financial management initiative cannot therefore be defined.

Both the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have introduced top management systems, which provide a structured framework for planning the strategic deployment of resources. All posts and departments in the diplomatic wing and all staff in the aid wing have an agreed set of objectives against which performance is regularly assessed.

Computerised management information systems provide managers at all levels with information on the costs of their programmes. The aid wing has a long-established system of budgeting for programme expenditure. Further delegated budgeting has been introduced, notably overseas. Thirty per cent. of local expenditure is now controlled directly by posts and greater responsibility has been devolved to Overseas Development Administration's development divisions.

These reforms have led to a clearer setting of priorities, more effective targeting of activities and greater awareness of the financial implications of policy decisions. The results of these improvements are reflected in the specific output measures published in Cm. 56 and in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's success in meeting many of the additional demands on its services through efficiency savings without recourse to extra resources from central funds.

Foreign Compensation (USSR)

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *212*, to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) if he will make a further statement on the response to the advertisement about the Foreign Compensation (USSR) (Registration and Determination of Claims) Order 1986.

Mr. Eggar: The closing date for claims in respect of bonds was 31 March 1987. As there was a last-minute rush to register claims for bonds by some major institutions which hold large numbers of them, it will be several weeks before accurate figures for the number of bonds received and their total face value is known. However, provisional estimates, and I would emphasise that these are only estimates, put the number of bonds received at half a million, with a face value of approximately £20 million. Up to the end of March some 3,300 requests for application forms in respect of other claims were received and dealt with by Foreign Compensation Commission. The closing date for these other claims is 30 June 1987.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of experiments on animals carried out in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom during the last three years which were of a non-medical nature.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, information on the primary purpose of experiments on living animals in Great Britain started in the years 1983 to 1985, the latest year for which information is currently available, is given in table 15 of "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals Great Britain, 1985" (Cmnd. 9839). Corresponding information for Scotland is given in the following table; corresponding information for Northern Ireland is not available.

Experiments by primary purpose: Scotland

Thousands

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Study of normal or abnormal body structure or function	119·3	115·6	122·1
To select, develop or study the use etc. of medical, dental and veterinary products	54·4	49·2	42·0
Development of transplant techniques	0·4	0·9	1·3
To select, develop or study the use, hazards or safety of:			
Plant pesticides (including fungicides)	1·0	0·5	4·1
Herbicides or substances modifying plant growth	[1]—	0·5	[1]—
Substances used in industry	2·6	1·3	3·4
Substances used in the household	[1]—	0·1	0·1
Cosmetics and toiletries	0·9	0·2	0·9
Food additives	3·8	0·4	1·1
Tobacco and its substitutes	—	—	—
Injurious plants or metazoan animals and their toxins	1·8	0·8	0·5

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
General environmental pollutants	1·9	5·6	6·7
To demonstrate known facts (Certificate C)	0·4	0·3	0·3
For other purposes	73·3	72·3	72·2
For more than one purpose	2·3	6·0	15·1
TOTAL	262·1	254·2	269·7

[1] Less than 50.

Passport Application Forms

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when post offices in The Wrekin constituency will be provided with passport application forms.

Mr. Waddington: This is part of a general problem. Shortages have arisen as a result of an exceptionally high level of demand for passports. Steps are being taken to increase the number of forms being printed and to restock any post offices in short supply as quickly as possible.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates are available to him as to the number of prisoners who are HIV positive.

Mr. Mellor: On 7 April the prison population of England and Wales included 44 inmates reported as having been identified as HIV antibody positive. There is no statistically reliable estimate of the number of unidentified cases.

Police Manpower

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what increases in police and other manpower he has approved for the six metropolitan joint police authorities in 1987-88.

Mr. Hurd: The following increases are contained in the establishment schemes for the six authorities for 1987-88, which I have laid before Parliament today.

Authority	*Additional Police Posts*	*Additional Civilian Staff*
Merseyside	—	49 full-time
Northumbria	[1]75	5 full-time
South Yorkshire	50	33 full-time 2 part-time
West Midlands	—	[2]427 full-time
West Yorkshire	50	50 full-time

Notes

[1] The increase of 75 police posts for Northumbria was announced on 18 December 1986. Thirty-five of the posts were with immediate effect and 40 with effect from 1 April 1987.

[2] The increase in the number of civilians in the West Midlands police is expected to release 382 police officers to operational duties.

Durham Prison

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A women prisoners there in Her Majesty's prison, Durham; how many strip searches have been made on category A prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Durham in March, indicating *(a)* strip searches before and after consultation with legal advisers, *(b)* after visits and *(c)* after cell change, wing search and cell search.

Mr. Mellor: Last month there were, until 25 March, four women category A prisoners in Durham prison. There have been three since that date. During the month strip searches were carried out on women prisoners in this category in the circumstances and the number of occasions shown:

	Number
After legal visits	Nil
After other visits	4
At the time of cell changes and wing and cell searches	11
Total	15

Metropolitan Police (Raid)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many police officers attended at 34 Carson road, Canning Town, E16, on the morning of 28 March, as to the purpose of the raid, as to how many occupants were in the flat, as to whether a warrant was presented and as to who was arrested and on what charge.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that five police officers entered 34 Carson road, Canning Town, E16 on the morning of 28 March 1987. Four uniformed officers arrived in response to a call for assistance from an officer who had arrested a man for road traffic offences. The man had assaulted the officer and then run to 34 Carson road. The only other person on the premises at the time was a woman alleged to be the man's girlfriend. No warrant was presented, nor was one necessary in the circumstances.

The man was arrested and charged with driving while unfit through alcohol, driving with excess alcohol and two charges of assaulting a police officer with intent to resist arrest.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of police engaged in wheel-clamping duties.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A maximum of 14 police constables supervise wheel clamping units from Mondays to Fridays, while six constables are deployed on such duties on Saturdays. In addition, the inspector, sergeant and six constables at the Hyde Park car pound spend a proportion of their time on duties arising from wheel clamping as does the chief inspector in charge.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for changing the area analyses of the crime figures.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans to change the area analyses of the recorded crime figures which are published annually by police force area in the Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issued in March and later in the year in more detail in "Criminal Statistics". Separate figures for London boroughs will continue to be placed in the Library of the House each quarter. More detailed analyses of the figures may be prepared and published from time to time.

Community Radio

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet had an opportunity to consider claims for compensation from applicants to the community radio experiment.

Mr. Mellor: We have received 35 claims for compensation from the final total of 270 applicants to the scheme. We have also considered the case for making a modest ex gratia payment to each applicant, in view of the cancellation of the experiment. However, we have decided that such payments from public funds would not be justified, in particular since it was made clear that applicants should not incur the expense of elaborate applications.

Terrorism

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the prevention of terrorism legislation before the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 expires in March 1989.

Mr. Hurd: I have asked Viscount Colville of Culross, QC, who carried out the 1986 annual scrutiny of the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1984 and will perform the same function in 1987, to carry out a general review of the Act. I am pleased to announce that Lord Colville has accepted my invitation. The terms of reference of his inquiry will be based on those given to Lord Shackleton and Lord Jellicoe when they reviewed the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts, 1974 and 1976, and will be as follows:

"Accepting the continuing need for legislation against terrorism, to assess the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1984, with particular regard to the effectiveness of the legislation and its effect on the liberties of the subject, and to report".

Lord Colville's report will be published as a Command Paper.

Any individual or organisation who wishes to submit written observations on matters relevant to Lord Colville's terms of reference should write to him, before 31 July at: Room 14, Hepburn House, Marsham Street, London SW1P 4HW.

PRIME MINISTER

Press Releases

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *457*, if she will list all press releases prepared with the aid of the new computer system in her Press Office since it was installed.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 17 March at columns *457-58*.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Self-adhesive Envelopes

Mr. Heddle asked the Lord Privy Seal what representations he has made to the suppliers of the House of Commons self-adhesive envelopes about the non-adhesiveness of those envelopes currently supplied to the Serjeant at Arms Department.

Mr. Biffen: A number of examples have been found in a batch of self seal envelopes code number 23(146)S where the adhesive on the top flap has been inadequate. HMSO was asked to pursue the matter with the manufacturer as soon as it came to light in February, and arrangements have recently been made for the remainder of the batch to be withdrawn from the Serjeant at Arms Stores. HMSO did check samples before delivery but has been asked to carry out a more extensive check in future.

European Legislation

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Lord Privy Seal when Her Majesty's Government expect to reply to the Second Special Report of Session 1985-86 from the Select Committee on European Legislation.

Mr. Biffen: The Government's response to the report is published today as a Command Paper (Cmnd. 123). Copies of the response have been placed in the Library.

WALES

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The financial management initiative covers a range of reforms aimed at obtaining the best possible return for public expenditure. The principles have been incorported into, and are increasingly indistinguishable from, my Department's drive towards more responsive management.

Budgeting is being extended; increasingly officials are accountable for the resources under their control and this has led to an improved awareness of costs and value for money. Every six months divisions report to me on the cost of their operations and progress towards agreed objectives; they also set targets for the period ahead. This informs me in the discussions which I have in the public expenditure cycle and has led generally to the better use and direction of resources. Some of the improvements can be seen in the tables of indicators of output incorporated

into Cm. 56. Examples of others are savings of 15 per cent. achieved by adopting new methods of distributing mail and up to 13 per cent. in respect of telephone call charges.

I am taking steps to improve the quality of the information provided and wherever it is sensible and practicable to do so to achieve a more consistent approach across my multi-functional Department. Approximately 80 per cent. of the public expenditure which falls within my responsibility is made available to local authorities, district health authorities and other public bodies. I expect them also to apply the principles of the initiative. An example of better management contributing to improved value for money is the closer attention to energy efficiency measures by the National Health Service in Wales which aims to realise savings of 20 per cent. in the five-year period to 1988-89.

Milk Outgoers Scheme

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to change the present milk outgoers scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The first phase of the Milk (Community Outgoers Scheme) closed on 15 February 1987. We shall shortly be announcing details of a new national outgoers scheme under which the rate of compensation will be 27·49p per litre payable over seven years.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many primary schoolchildren in each local education authority area in Wales *(a)* speak Welsh as their principal language/home language and *(b)* speak Welsh fluently as a second language.

Mr. Roberts: The information, which relates to pupils aged five and over in maintained primary schools, as at September 1985, is given in the following table:

Number of pupils assessed as being fluent

	First language[1]	*Second language*[2]
Clwyd	1,401	2,367
Dyfed	4,783	4,032
Gwent	17	393
Gwynedd	6,638	5,114
Mid Glamorgan	264	3,307
Powys	454	520
South Glamorgan	278	700
West Glamorgan	685	837

[1] Pupils whose home language is Welsh.
[2] Pupils whose home language is not Welsh.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of primary school children in each local education authority area in Wales speak Welsh fluently as a second language; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1977.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The percentages of pupils, aged 5 and over in maintained primary schools, who speak Welsh fluently as a second language are given in the following table. The figures, which relate to September of each year, exclude pupils whose principal language is Welsh.

Percentage

	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Clwyd	5·7	6·9	6·1	5·4	5·6	6·9	7·8	8·1	8·3
Dyfed	8·8	10·0	11·4	12·5	12·3	13·6	14·2	15·0	17·4
Gwent	0·2	0·4	0·4	0·7	0·7	0·9	1·0	1·1	1·2
Gwynedd	17·4	18·4	19·8	20·4	22·1	22·4	26·6	27·1	31·9
Mid Glamorgan	3·9	4·6	5·4	5·9	6·3	6·8	7·3	7·6	8·2
Powys	6·3	6·9	4·4	4·9	7·1	5·8	7·1	6·9	6·5
South Glamorgan	1·0	1·2	1·3	1·8	3·0	1·7	1·5	2·3	2·6
West Glamorgan	2·8	2·8	3·2	4·0	4·9	3·2	3·4	3·0	3·2

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the secondary schools in each local education authority in Wales in which it is possible for pupils *(a)* to undertake most or all of their education through the medium of the Welsh language, and *(b)* to undertake part of their education through the medium of Welsh; and if he will indicate the schools in which no teaching, or very little teaching is done through the medium of Welsh.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the form requested is not readily available.

The following provisional information for September 1986 indicates, however, those schools in which none of the teaching is undertaken through the medium of Welsh and those in which at least some of the teaching is undertaken through the medium of Welsh. For each school in the latter category the number of subjects offered through the medium of Welsh is given.

SCHOOLS IN WHICH AT LEAST SOME OF THE TEACHING IS UNDERTAKEN THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

Clwyd
Ysgol Uwchradd Maes Garmon[3]
Ysgol Glan Clwyd[4]
Brynhyfryd[2]
Ysgol Morgan Llwyd[4]

Dyfed
Llandovery County High[2]
Llandeilo County Secondary[1]
Amman Valley Comprehensive[1]
Ysgol y Preseli[3]
Lampeter County Secondary Comprehensive[2]
Aberaeron Comprehensive[3]
Cardigan County Secondary[1]
Ysgol Uwchradd Tregaron[2]
Ysgol Gyfun Y Strade[4]
Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin[3]
Ysgol Gyfun Ddwyieithog Teifi[4]
Ysgol Gyfun Ddwyieithog[2]
Fishguard Comprehensive[1]

Gwynedd
Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen[5]
Ysgol Botwnnog[4]
Ysgol Brynrefail[4]
Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle[4]
Ysgol Eifionydd[3]

Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones[5]
Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi[1]
Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni[3]
Ysgol David Hughes[4]
Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern[3]
Ysgol y Gader[3]
Ysgol y Moelwyn[3]
Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn[1]
Ysgol Y Berwyn[4]
Ysgol Ardudwy[4]
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy[5]
Ysgol Friars[2]
Ysgol Tryfan[4]
Ysgol Y Creuddyn[5]
Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen[4]
Ysgol Glan y Mor[3]

Mid Glamorgan
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydfelen[1]
Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari[3]
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni[3]

Powys
Caereinion High[2]
Llanfyllin High[3]
Llanidloes High[1]
Ysgol Bro Ddyfi[4]
Llandrindod High[1]
Builth Wells High[1]
Maesydderwen Comprehensive[1]
Brecon High[1]

South Glamorgan
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf[5]

West Glamorgan
Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera[4]
Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr[4]

[1] Schools in which one to four subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.
[2] Schools in which five to nine subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.
[3] Schools in which 10 to 14 subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.
[4] Schools in which 15 to 19 subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.
[5] Schools in which 20 subjects and over are taught through the medium of Welsh.

SCHOOLS IN WHICH NO TEACHING IS UNDERTAKEN THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

Clwyd
Hawarden High
Rhyl High
Mold Alun
Elfed High
Holywell High
St. David's High
Prestatyn High
The Maelor
Castell Alun High
Deeside High
Flint High
Connah's Quay High
Ysgol Bryn Elian
Ysgol Emrys Ap Iwan
Eirias High
Denbigh High
Ysgol Dinas Bran
Ysgol-y-Grango
Ysgol Bryn Alyn
Darland
St. David's
Ysgol Bryn Offa
Yate Sixth form College
Ysgol Uwchradd Argoed
Ysgol Rhiwabon
The Groves High School
St. Richard Gwyn High
Blessed Edward Jones High
St. Joseph's RC High

Dyfed
Ysgol Gruffydd Jones
Milford Haven CS
Ysgol Dewi Sant
Greenhill Comprehensive
Milford Haven Grammar
Pembroke Comprehensive
Penglais Comprehensive
Coedcae Comprehensive
Graig Comprehensive
Glan-y-Mor Comprehensive
Bryngwyn Comprehensive
Sir Thomas Picton Comprehensive
Queen Elizabeth Maridunum Comprehensive
Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn
Gwendraeth Valley Comprehensive
Whitland Grammar School
Tasker Milward VC Comprehensive
St. John Lloyd RC Comprehensive
Queen Elizabeth Cambria Comprehensive

Gwent
Newport St. Julian's Comprehensive
Newport Dyffryn Comprehensive
Hartridge Comprehensive Newport
Newport Bettws Comprehensive
Liswerry Comprehensive Newport
Newport Queens Comprehensive
Brynmawr Comprehensive
Bassaleg Comprehensive
Newbridge Comprehensive
Pontllanfraith Comprehensive
Glynocoed Junior Comprehensive
Blackwood Comprehensive
Llantarnam Comprehensive
Croesyceiliog Comprehensive
Oakdale Comprehensive
Glanyrafon Junior Comprehensive
Cwmcarn Comprehensive
Caerleon Comprehensive
Monmouth Comprehensive
Tredegar Comprehensive
Fairwater Comprehensive
King Henry VIII Comprehensive
Chepstow Comprehensive
Caldicot Comprehensive
Ebbw Vale Senior Comprehensive
Risca Comprehensive
Abersychan Comprehensive
Trevethin Comprehensive
West Monmouth Comprehensive
Nantyglo Comprehensive
Abertillery Comprehensive
St. Joseph's Comprehensive
St. Alban's RC Comprehensive

Gwynedd
Ysgol John Bright
Ysgol Aberconwy
Loreto RC Middle School

Mid Glamorgan
Afon Taf High
Pen-y-Dre High
Cyfarthfa High
Vaynor and Penderyn Comprehensive
Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive
Coedylan Comprehensive
Hawthorn Comprehensive
Mountain Ash County Comprehensive
Blaengwawr Comprehensive
Tonyrefail Comprehensive
Cynffig Comprehensive
St. Cenydd Comprehensive
St. Ilan Comprehensive
Bryntirion Comprehensive
St. Martins Comprehensive
Maesteg Comprehensive
Heolddu Comprehensive

Ynysawdre Comprehensive
Lewis Boys Comprehensive
Pencoed Comprehensive
Lewis Girls Comprehensive
Brynteg Comprehensive
Porthcawl Comprehensive
Treorchy Comprehensive
Ferndale Comprehensive
Ogmore Comprehensive
Porth County Comprehensive
Rhymney Comprehensive
Bedwas Comprehensive
Tonypandy Comprehensive
Y Pant Comprehensive
Cymmer Comprehensive
Aberdare Boys' Comprehensive
Aberdare Girls' Comprehensive
Bedwellty Comprehensive
Bishop Hedley High
Archbishop McGarth
Cardinal Newman Catholic Comprehensive
St. John Baptist Comprehensive

Powys
Newtown High
Welshpool High
John Beddoes County Secretary
Gwernyfed High
Crickhowell High

South Glamorgan
Rumney High
Glyn Derw High
Cardiff High
Glan Ely High
Willows High
Fitzalan High
Llanedeyrn High
Cantonian High
Whitchurch High
Llanishen High
Llanrumney High
Hawardian High
Cathays High
Llanilltud Fawr Comprehensive
Barry Boy's Comprehensive
Bryn Hafren Comprehensive
Stanwell Comprehensive
St. Cyres Comprehensive
Cowbridge Comprehensive
Radyr Comprehensive
St. Illtyds VA College
Heathfield House High
Archbishop Mostyn RC High
The Bishop of Llandaff High
St. Teilo's CIW High
Bishop Hannon High
Lady Mary RC High
St. Cadoc's RC Comprehensive

West Glamorgan
Mynyddbach Comprehensive
Penlan Boys Comprehensive
Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive
Olchfa Comprehensive
Morriston Senior Comprehensive
Llansamlet Junior Comprehensive
Dynevor Comprehensive
Pentrehafod Comprehensive
Bishop Gore Comprehensive
Cymer Afan Comprehensive
Glan Afan
Sandfields Comprehensive
Dyffryn Comprehensive
Penyrheol Comprehensive
Gowerton Comprehensive
Llangatwg Comprehensive
Dwr y Felin Comprehensive
Cwrt Sart Comprehensive
Bishopston Comprehensive
Dillwyn Llewlyn Comprehensive
Pontarddulais Comprehensive
Bishop Vaughan Comprehensive
St. Joseph's RC Comprehensive
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive
Cwmtawe Comprehensive

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of primary school children in each local authority area in Wales do not receive Welsh language lessons.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The percentages of pupils who are not taught Welsh in maintained primary schools, as at September 1985, are given in the table:

	Percentage
Clwyd	3·8
Dyfed	19·1
Gwent	98·7
Gwynedd	1·0
Mid Glamorgan	13·4
Powys	19·8
South Glamorgan	54·9
West Glamorgan	38·0

Regional Services (North Wales)

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce decisions on the recommendations of the review of regional services to north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am pleased to be able to announce the decisions which will take forward the review of regional services to north Wales. These have been set out in a Welsh health circular which has been issued today.

The review constituted a thorough appraisal of the adequacy of regional services provided for patients in north Wales. It also covered those major regional services which are available elsewhere in Wales and those operated by authorities in England to which patients in north Wales have access.

The recommendations of the review were the subject of wide consultation with health authorities and other interested bodies. The great majority of responses received supported the report's findings. As a consequence it is my right hon. Friend's intention to implement the report in the light of the comments received and in collaboration with the district and English regional health authorities concerned as quickly as possible. The following action is to be taken:

burns and plastic surgery services are to be improved by additional out-patient sessions at Bangor and Wrexham funded by the Welsh Office;

together with North Wales health authorities, the Welsh Office will examine options for providing additional facilities for cardiac services with Welsh Office funding;

the medical oncology service in North Wales is to be designated as a regional service. Discussions with the relevant health authorities to that end will be initiated soon by the Department; in addition, to ensure that cancer treatment services are organised as effectively as possible I propose to fund a study of the provision of those services to include the feasibility of providing a satellite radiotherapy centre in North Wales;

the Department is to initiate discussions with the relevant health authorities on the location in North Wales of a satellite artificial limb and appliance centre which will reduce significantly the need of disabled persons to make the journey to Merseyside;

funds are to be made available to provide fast, comfortable ambulance transport for those patients who

have to travel the long distance from Gwynedd to the Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre and to the Radiotherapy Centre in Merseyside;

the service to Wales of the Welsh Poisons Information Centre is to be improved and consideration is being given to its relocation in association with toxicological services;

the Department will also be pursuing with the appropriate health authorities the implementation of a number of more detailed recommendations for improving district and regional services.

These decisions should lay the foundation for a significant improvement in the coverage and quality of health care services available to people in north Wales.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales when copies of the report of the review of the Welsh Development Agency will be made available.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Copies of the report have now been placed in the Library of the House.

Appeals (Ministerial Adjudication)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales in what circumstances he has the role of adjudicator in appeals against decisions made by local authorities and public bodies in Wales; and if he will list the powers under which he fulfils that role.

Mr. Mark Robinson [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1987, c. *516*]: A list of the various appellate powers given to the Secretary of State for Wales against decisions made by local and public bodies in Wales are shown in the following tables:

General Dental Services Regs 1973

National Health Service
Sch 1, Para 17
Decision of Executive Council and Dental Estimates Board.

NHS Regs 1974. SI 160
Reg 12
Refusal of Family Practitioner Committee to include doctor on Medical List etc.
Reg 30(6)
Decision of Rural Dispensng Committee that pharmaceutical services be provided.
Reg 30G(1)
Decision of Rural Dispensing Committee on pharmaceutical services application.
Reg 3
Refusal of Family Practitoner Committee of deputising services.
Reg 3
Refusal by F.P.C. on approval of consultation premises.
Reg 3
Conditions imposed by Medical Practices Committee.

NHS Service Committees etc Regs 1974
Reg 11
Decision of F.P.C.
Reg 21
Decision of Dental Estimates Board.
Reg 48
Decision of tribunal constituted under s. 42 of NHS Act 1946.

NHS Act 1977
Section 33
Refusal by Medical Practices Committee of application for inclusion in list to provide general medical services.
Section 40
Determination of a recognised committee re general ophthalmic services.
Section 46
Direction of a Tribunal that a practitioner's name be removed from the list.

Community Health Regulations 1985
Reg 20
Refusal of District Health Authority to disclose information.

NHS General Ophthalmic Services Regs 1986
Reg 5
Decision of Ophthalmic Qualifications Committee that appellant is disqualified.

Welsh Office Planning Procedure Paper 1975
Proposals of District Health Authority re closure of Health Service buildings.

Terms and Conditions of Service of Hospital Staff 1981
Para 190
Termination of appointment.

Agriculture and Land Drainage
Agriculture Act 1967—
Section 49
Witholding of consent by a Rural Development Board to land transfer.
Section 52
Refusal of licence to plant trees.
Land Drainage Act 1976—
Section 68
Refusal of Internal Drainage Board re exemption of rates.
Section 84
Resolution of water authority requiring contribution to expenses.
Section 86
Resolution specifying amounts in lieu of contribution.

Environmental Protection
Public Health Act 1936—
Section 17
Local authority declaration re adoption of sewers.
Public Health (Drainage of Trade Premises) Act 1937—
Section 3
Local authority decision as to discharge of trade effluent.
Coast Protection Act 1949—
Section 7
Determination of a coast protection authority.
National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949—
Section 29
Draft maps etc prepared by surveying authorities.
Clean Air Act 1968—
Section 4
Local authority decision re arrestment plant.
Section 6
Local authority decision not to approve chimney height.
Control of Pollution Act 1974—
Section 10
Decision on licence for waste disposal.
Section 39
Decision on inland water protection.
Section 43
Water authority notices controlling discharges of trade effluent.
Sections 64, 65 & 67
Decision of local authority on noise pollution protection.
Section 87
Local Authority notice requiring air pollution information.
Special Waste Regulations 1980—
Regulation 9
Refusal to give directions concerning special waste.

Highways etc.
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Schedule 14
Decision by Authority not to make Modification Order.

Highways Act 1980
Section 183
Local highway authority refusal of licence to lay apparatus.
Section 220
Application of advance payments code.
Section 233
Application of private street works code.

Town and Country Planning
Town and Country Planning Act 1971, Section 36
Planning decision of local planning authority.
Section 37
Default of planning decision.
Section 88
Enforcement notice.
Section 95(2)
Established use certificate.
Section 103
Replacement of trees in a Tree Preservation Order.
T.P.O. Regulations 1969, Paragraph 21, Article 25
LPA's refusal to consent to cutting etc.
Control of Advertisements Regulations 1984, Regulation 22
Refusal of consent for display of advertisement.
Land Compensation Act 1961, Section 18
Certificate of appropriate alternative development.

Water
Water Act 1945, Section 18
Byelaws for preventing pollution of water of undertakers.
Water Resources Act 1963
Section 39
Decision of water authority re licence.
Section 40
Failure of water authority to determine application for licence.
Section 72
Refusal of water authority's consent re control of discharges into underground strata.
Section 78
Conservation notice.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Pensioners

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether all pensioners whose sole income is the full national insurance pension are entitled to some supplementary benefit; and how the figures for the national insurance pension for a single person and married couple compare with the minimum they would be entitled to have their incomes increased to by supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: The amount of supplementary benefit payable, if any, is dependent upon the claimant's circumstances. Pensioners who have available capital in excess of £3,000 are not entitled to supplementary benefit. Unless they are entitled to special additions, pensioners in the following categories who are in receipt of standard rate basic retirement pension (in respect of couples, where their pensions are based on the contribution record of only one partner) would not be entitled to supplementary benefit:

(a) Single person living as member of someone else's household.

(b) Single resident in accommodation provided by a local authority under part III of the National Assistance Act 1948 (unless they have continuing housing requirements for example water rates).

(c) Single person or both partners of a couple in hospital.

(d) Exceptionally, a single woman householder aged under 65 or a married couple with very low net housing requirements (but they may be entitled to housing benefit supplement).

The relevant rates of retirement pension and supplementary benefit are as follows.

	Current rate £	*Rate from 6 April* £
Retirement pension		
On own insurance	38·70	39·50
On spouse's insurance	23·25	23·75
Supplementary pension		
Householder		
Single aged under 65	[1]37·90	[1]38·65
Single aged 65 and over	[1][2]39·10	[1][2]39·85
Couple[3]	[1][2]61·85	[1][2]63·05
Non-householder		
Single	[4]34·25	[4]35·00
Couple	[4]64·55	[4]65·90
Boarder personal expenses[5]		
Single	10·95	11·15
Couple	21·90	22·30
Resident in Part III accommodation[6]		
Single	38·70	39·50
Couple	77·40	79·00
Hospital in-patient (personal expenses)[7]		
Single	7·75	7·90
Couple (both in-patients)	15·50	15·80

[1] Housing requirements not covered by housing benefit (for example water rates) payable in addition.
[2] Figures include heating addition of £2·20 paid automatically to householders aged 65 and over, less £1 available scale margin.
[3] Where at least one of the couple is aged 65 or over.
[4] Figures include a housing addition of £3·90 (£4·05 from 6 April).
[5] Paid in addition to an amount for the board and lodging charge plus any meals not included in the charge (subject to certain limits).
[6] The rate for single persons coincides with the standard retirement pension rate. For married couples the figure is doubled.
[7] Continuing housing requirements paid in addition. Where only one of a couple are in hospital, the basic supplementary benefit is unchanged for eight weeks when it is reduced in line with the reduction in retirement pension.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further steps he is taking to seek to protect children from abuse.

Mr. Newton: The second stage of our training initiative to tackle child abuse will consist initially of four projects and cost £200,000 in 1987-88.

The first of the four will involve the Open University in a two-year project to produce an introductory course on the problems of recognition and referral in cases of child abuse for professionals and others.

The second is for a video and training pack on child sexual abuse for medical practitioners under the auspices of the Royal Society of Medicine.

The other two projects will cover inter-disciplinary working: Professor Stevenson of Nottingham university will be developing training materials on the inter-agency aspects of case conferences; and the NSPCC will be developing training for social workers and health visitors who need to provide expert advice to colleagues in their own agencies.

This programme complements other work already announced which the Department has in hand, including a new guide on inter-agency co-operation ("Working Together") and on the handling of child abuse ("Inquiries"); the preparation of practice guidance for social workers and health visitors; conferences organised

by the Social Services Inspectorate on child sexual abuse; and the preparation of new legislation as envisaged in the White Paper "The Law on Child and Family Services".

I believe that the four projects, together with the first stage of our training initiative which my right hon. Friend announced last October and the work which the Department has on hand, will make a useful contribution to improving practice in this area of child care, which is of concern to us all.

Mid Staffordshire (Hospital)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in the construction of the new hospital planned to serve the Mid-Staffordshire parliamentary constituency and neighbouring constituencies.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend will be aware that the West Midlands regional health authority is responsible for the management of individual building schemes contained in its operational capital programme. However, I understand that work on the new Lichfield/Tamworth district general hospital will commence in July 1989. The adjustment of the starting date arises from a review of the region's £870 million capital programme to ensure that the year-on-year expenditure remains within budget.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for severe weather payments have been made in Dundee since 1 January; and how many applications have been granted.

Mr. Major: Information concerning the number of applications made in Dundee for exceptionally cold weather payments is not available. However, for the period from 1 January 1987 to 10 March 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the two Dundee local offices made approximately 8,000 £5 weekly payments.

National No-smoking Day

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much public money paid directly or indirectly has been used in the national no-smoking day campaign.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 18 December 1986, at column *702*.

NHS (Building Projects)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total national financial provision for building projects for *(a)* National Health Service hospitals and *(b)* other National Health Service facilities in the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the provision for hospital and community health services capital and other National Health Service capital for 1986-87 and 1987-88 and planned provision for 1988-89. Allocations are not aligned to particular projects. Their deployment and the use of income generated locally from the sale of surplus land and buildings is a matter for individual spending authorities.

Capital Provision (£ million)

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89 (plans)*
Hospital and community health services capital:			
gross	894	922	952
receipts	141	136	140
net	753	786	812
Other National Health Service capital:			
gross	43	37	37
receipts	1	1	0
net	42	36	37
Total National Health Service capital:			
gross	937	959	989
receipts	142	137	140
net	795	822	849

Note:
Capital receipts for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are taken from the published Supply Estimate and for 1988-89 are provisional.

Mediparks

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to encourage the development of mediparks making use of surplus land with a view to encouraging technological innovation.

Mrs. Currie: It is for the regional and district health authorities concerned to consider in the light of local circumstances any specific proposals which are put to them for the use of surplus National Health Service land, including development of mediparks.

Referral Patterns

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consult the Royal College of General Practitioners as to whether referral patterns can be changed to make maximum use of new hospital facilities provided in recent years.

Mr. Newton: General medical practitioners usually prefer to refer their patients to hospitals conveniently situated, but they may refer to any National Health Service hospital consultant able to accept them. Referral patterns and waiting lists are amongst the topics currently being discussed with the medical profession.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his proposals for reducing cross-boundary patient flows in the context of resource allocation policy.

Mr. Newton: Our policy is to distribute resources more fairly across the country so as to ensure equal opportunity of access to health care for people in equal need. We expect regions to follow the same principles in planning services and allocating resources across their districts.

Patterns of patient flows across health authority boundaries will change and in many cases may reduce as this process continues, but the pace and extent of such changes will depend on local circumstances. District self-sufficiency is not an aim; patient flows will continue for specialist treatment, or where natural catchment areas of hospitals or other facilities do not exactly match health

authority boundaries. In addition, general medical practitioners remain free to refer patients to the hospital consultant of their choice.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated number of patients treated in hospitals in the London borough of Hillingdon referred by general medical practitioners in practice in the boroughs of Watford, Harrow and Ealing and in the counties of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire; and what additional financial resources are received by Hillingdon district health authority to take account of these cross-boundary flows.

Mr. Newton: Information about hospital referrals by general medical practitioners is not collated centrally.

My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the Hillingdon district health authority for any information about the location of practices of general medical practitioners referring patients to hospitals in the district, and the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority, which is responsible for resource allocation to individual districts. The general principle followed by regional health authorities is that district funding takes account of cross-boundary flows of patients.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will consult the North West Thames regional health authority about the extent to which general medical practitioners in the boroughs of Ealing, Watford and Harrow and in the counties of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire are encouraged to refer patients to consultants in the hospitals that have been newly provided in their boroughs and counties in recent years;

(2) if he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that regional health authorities in the Thames regions consult their respective family practitioner committees with a view to achieving a change in referral patterns so that patients can take advantage of the facilities provided by the National Health Service in the boroughs and districts in which they are resident.

Mr. Newton: We encourage regional and district health authorities to consult family practitioner committees and local medical commitees with the aim of encouraging general medical practitioners to make the most appropriate referrals for their patients bearing in mind the needs of individual patients and the location and availability of appropriate services.

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the extent of the interim relief money recently allocated to Hillingdon district health authority to take account of cross-boundary flows.

Mr. Newton: Hillingdon district health authority has been awarded £450,000 from the £2·6 million allocated to North West Thames regional health authority. This allocation was from a special fund of £30 million over two years designed to assist regions with less than average growth.

Decisions on how the £2·6 million should be distributed to districts were a matter for North West Thames regional health authority.

Hillingdon District Health Authority (Finance)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to seek to accelerate the rate at which patients from Ealing, Watford, Harrow, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire are treated at hospitals in their respective areas and to ensure that the movement of financial resources from Hillingdon is deferred until this has been achieved.

Mr. Newton: Strategic planning for the region as a whole, and resource allocation to district health authorities, is primarily a matter for the North West Thames regional health authority. Where new facilities are being developed and resources redeployed within or between regions, which may have effects on referral patterns, the extent and pace of change is also primarily a matter for the authorities concerned.

Pathology

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans there are to encourage health authorities to put pathology services out to competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There are no present plans to encourage health authorities to put pathology services out to competitive tendering.

Deaf-Blind People

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money his Department is making available for the purchase of Hasicom equipment for use by the deaf-blind.

Mr. Major: The Department has not provided funding, but the Department of Trade and Industry helped to set up the Hasicom project by providing £85,000 towards equipment costs and £10,000 in consultancy fees. Local authorities, if they consider that there is a need for such equipment, have a duty to provide it under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The Manpower Services Commission can also loan equipment if it is considered that this will help a disabled person overcome problems in the workplace and work efficiently.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the number of deaf-blind persons in England and Wales.

Mr. Major: The information available centrally relates to the numbers of persons registered with social services departments in England as being blind with an additional handicap. The information cannot be considered comprehensive because registration is voluntary, the registers may not reflect migration or deaths and additional handicaps may not be categorised. The latest information is given in the table. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Number of Persons Registered as Blind who are also Deaf or Hard of Hearing at 31 March 1986

England *Number*

	Males	*Females*	*Total*
Blind-Deaf without speech	126	153	279
Blind-Deaf with speech	501	868	1,369
Blind-Hard of hearing	1,049	1,952	3,001

Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet made an appointment to the chairmanship of the Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer Screening.

Mr. Newton: We have appointed professor Martin Vessey, professor of social and community medicine in the university of Oxford, as chairman of the Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer Screening. Other members will be appointed shortly.

The role of the advisory committee will be to advise on the development of the breast cancer screening service, to monitor its effectiveness and its efficiency and to advise on research concerned with the provision of the service.

Responsibility for ensuring that a call and recall service for breast cancer screening for all women in England in the 50 to 64 age group has been set up by the target date of 31 March 1990 will lie with the small team led by Sir Roy Griffiths, which, as my right hon. Friend announced on 1 April, will also be overseeing the implementation of the call and recall system for cervical cancer screening.

AIDS

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance the chief medical officer at his Department has given on the professional position of doctors suffering from AIDS; what information he has as to the number of *(a)* general practitioners, *(b)* hospital doctors and *(c)* other doctors suffering from AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *74*]: Like any other sick person, doctors with AIDS would receive advice from their own medical practitioners on whether they were fit to continue at work. The expert advisory group on AIDS, which is chaired by the chief medical officer, is currently preparing guidance on whether any restrictions are needed on the employment of HIV-infected doctors. The current advice from the United States, where there is far greater experience of HIV infection, is that it is not necessary to recommend restrictions on the activity of health care workers who are infected with HIV. The Department does not have information on the occupation of patients with AIDS and is unable to provide the information requested.

Death Grant

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many death grant payments were made in the London borough of Southwark in each of the last three years and how many of those who received the payments will be eligible for the new means-tested death grant.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *110*]: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The London borough of Southwark is covered by the Department's offices in Peckham, Southwark, Brixton, Kennington Park and Lewisham, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the borough. The number of claims for death grant received in each of the five local offices during the last three years (April to April) were as follows:

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*[1]
Peckham	1,245	1,331	1,126
Southwark	723	728	649
Brixton	800	926	739
Kennington Park	598	610	495
Lewisham	1,198	1,531	1,226

[1] To 10 March 1987.

It is not possible to predict how many people in the borough of Southwark will qualify for funeral payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to what percentage of the residents of the London borough of Southwark will be eligible for the new means-tested death grant.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *110*]: Such a prediction depends, in part, on the number of people in the London borough of Southwark who receive supplementary benefit, or housing benefit, or family income supplement. Since all of this information is not available on the basis of local authority areas, no estimates of local levels of eligibility have been made.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Scott: The Northern Ireland Office has implemented a programme of work to improve the value for money obtained from the Department's expenditure. Line managers have been given greater responsibility for, and better information on, expenditure in their areas of responsibility. This includes a management information system under which managers set objectives and targets and identify output and performance measures. The redesign and computerisation of the Department's accounting and financial information systems has accompanied the delegation of responsibility for the management of expenditure to line managers, including scope to redeploy resources across programme and running cost budgets.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service, in parallel with developments in the Home Civil Service, has also engaged in a programme to improve financial management and efficiency by a variety of means. These include the use of top management systems to bring together information on objectives, resources, and performance, the development of computerised financial information and accounting systems to assist in budgeting and control of departmental expenditure and in the progressive application of the cost centre concept, and new initiatives on training and personnel management.

The practical effects of the FMI within my area of responsibility can be seen in two particular respects. First, there are real long-term benefits emerging in the form of enhanced managerial awareness of the need to define clear objectives for the use of resources, to use these to set challenging targets and to measure performance against targets through the use of relevant management information. Secondly, this work has already led to greater efficiency in a number of areas where progress can more readily be quantified. Examples include a projected 5 per

cent. decrease in energy consumption in Northern Ireland prisons, a reduction of £7·3 million in Northern Ireland electricity generating costs, a 5 per cent. reduction in unit costs per student at agricultural colleges, a Province-wide reduction in water leakage levels from 21 to 26 litres per property per hour to 13·19 litres by 1988-89, and the redeployment of £28 million in the Northern Ireland Health Service over the next five years to higher priority areas through better use of resources.

Motor Vehicles (Offences)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures for Northern Ireland corresponding to those published for England and Wales in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles England and Wales" issued by the Secretary of State for the Home Department; and if he will make a statememt.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *67*]: Figures corresponding to those published in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles England and Wales" are not available for Northern Ireland. However, I have today placed in the Library, a copy of "A Commentary on Northern Ireland Crime Statistics 1985" published by the Northern Ireland Office, which give, amongst other data, information on motoring in Northern Ireland.

Housing Executive

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the allocation of funds to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for capital works to existing dwellings as at 1 April 1986;

(2) what was the outturn figure for capital works caried out to existing dwellings owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as at 31 March 1987;

(3) what was the funding allocation to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for capital works to existing dwellings in the south region as at 1 April 1986;

(4) what was the outturn figure for capital works to existing dwellings in the south region of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as at 31 March 1986;

(5) what increased funding was requested by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for capital expenditure to existing dwellings at the last autumn review; and what increase was allocated;

(6) what increased funding was requested by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the south region at the last autumn review; and what increase was allocated.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *118-19*]: The Housing Executive's budget for capital works existing dwellings approved by the Department of the Environment (NI) for 1986-87 was £64 million. Additional capital receipts, savings elsewhere within the Executive's budgets and the transfer of a surplus of £1·5 million from the co-ownership scheme led the Executive to seek a number of revisions to its approved budgets in the autumn, including an increase to £68 million in the budget for work to existing dwellings. I understand from the Housing Executive that, on the basis of provisional figures, outturn for capital works to existing dwellings in 1986-87 is estimated to have been £67·9 million.

The distribution of resources to its regions within agreed objectives and priorities is a matter for the Housing Executive and I shall arrange for the chairman to write to the hon. Member about the position in the south region.

Mr. Seamus Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the period of the delay in a payment from the Masonic Housing Association to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for a housing development in Donaghadee, established by a local government audit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the normal accounting procedures of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive were implemented in relation to a payment from the Masonic Housing Association in respect of a housing development in Donaghadee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *118-19*]: A payment of £322,000 was made to the Masonic Housing Association (NI) Ltd. by the Department of the Environment (NI) on 23 March 1984 to allow the association to meet part of the cost of 20 dwellings constructed for it at Donaghadee by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, within a total contract of 40 dwellings.

I understand from the chairman of the Housing Executive that a recoverable charge was not formally raised against the association at the time in accordance with normal procedures. Payment was not, therefore, demanded by the executive and made by the association until February 1987. I also understand that the Housing Executive's procedures have now been revised to ensure that similar delays will not recur.

Mr. Seamus Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the approved budget of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nursery at Dundonald between 1983 and 1985;

(2) how great was the loss to public funds deriving from overspending of the approved budget during 1983 to 1985 at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nursery at Dundonald;

(3) by how much the approved budget of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive nursery at Dundonald for 1983 to 1985 was exceeded.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *118-19*]: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive, who has informed me that the Housing Executive's financial systems did not entail the setting of a specific budget for the nursery. Financial provision for planting and general landscaping services which have been provided partly by the executive's own nursery but also by private contractors is made by each region within approved capital and revenue budgets; it would not be possible without disproportionate cost to identify the costs of services provided by the nursery, which is to close at the end of May.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

RSPCA (Complaint)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has yet received notification of any decision taken by the EEC Commission indicating its response to a complaint lodged by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in February 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thomson [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987]: I received such a communication late yesterday.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Barriers)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken since June of 1986 to have inspections made to the footings of motorway barriers; what defects or deficiencies have been found; what steps he intends to take as a result; what proportion of total motorway mileage has been covered by such inspections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Detailed inspections are being made this year to a sample of concrete post-footings during major maintenance works to carriageways where lane closures are required that give access to safety fences. These inspections are designed to identify the likely extent of misshapen footings. Any such footings found are being replaced. These inspections are in addition to those being carried out under a new code of practice for routine maintenance introduced in 1985.

Comprehensive information on mileages inspected, defects found and remedial action taken is not yet available. We estimate that detailed inspections this year will cover a sample of up to about 150 miles of motorway safety fences. Complete results of detailed inspections to footings will not be available until the end of this year.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 25 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and my subsequent letter to him of 27 March, a copy of which is in the Library.

Light Dues

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has initiated studies about the effect of light dues on the use of British ports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The light dues regime has virtually no effect on the volume of trade at many ports, but my Department is studying the extent to which the regime leads to trans-shipment of liner container traffic, which is of special importance to some ports.

Motorway Lane Closures

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the dates, times and places during which stretches of the M1 motorway between Derby (junction 25) and London have been reduced to single file traffic since January 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available. Where work involving single file running is planned, it is where possible carried out overnight or at other times when traffic volumes are at a minimum. We try to keep traffic disruption and delays to a minimum. Single lane running is only employed where there is no reasonable alternative.

Motorways (Signs)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of construction and erection of the "Keep Your Distance" signs on the M1 motorway at junction 6A.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The two signs on M1 at junction 6A now used to display the message "Keep Your Distance" cost £50,000 to install. They were first used for traffic management purposes during the final stages of completion of M25.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to erect further "Keep Your Distance" signs on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Further use of "Keep Your Distance" signs will depend on the outcome of the experiment currently being conducted at the southern end of the M1. This experiment at present consists of nine permanent display motorway signs and a pair of variable message signs near junction 6A. There is also a pair of variable message signs on the M25 at junction 18 which are normally devoted to this purpose.

The southern end of the M1 was chosen for this experiment because of the very heavy traffic density. The effectiveness of the signs is being monitored by the various police forces which patrol the sections of the motorway on which they have been erected.

Marine Surveying (Reorganisation)

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the report on the reorganisation of the marine surveying department.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have placed in the Library a copy of the departmental notice describing the reorganisation of the Surveyor General's Organisation, which came into force on 1 April.

Wheelchairs (Station Access)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when there will be a fully wheelchair-accessible station-to-station service after the existing contract has expired.

Mr. David Mitchell: Decisions on the future of the existing service beyond the present contract have not been taken. I understand that LRT intends to review the inter-station service in the light of experience once the wheelchair-accessible airbus service to Heathrow is in operation.

London Underground

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the estimated yearly savings on staff costs to London Regional Transport from the introduction of the Underground ticketing system.

Mr. David Mitchell: The current estimate from London Underground is that annual savings in staff costs of around £10 million will be achieved when the new Underground ticketing system is fully operational.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what applications he has received from London Regional Transport for the purchase of replacement rolling stock for the Central Line of the Underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. The requirements for replacement rolling stock have yet to be fully defined, following technical trials of prototype trains later this year.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken in the past

two years by London Regional Transport or consultants appointed by them on the extension of existing Underground lines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: A number of enhancements to the Underground network are under consideration by the London passenger transport group. These include extensions to the Bakerloo, Jubilee East London, Metropolitan and Victoria lines.

London Passenger Transport Group

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when was the last meeting of the London Passenger Transport Group; and what was discussed at that meeting.

Mr. David Mitchell: The group met on 1 April, and discussed a range of matters concerning British Rail and London Regional Transport. These included joint ticketing, interchange improvements and rail planning issues.

LRT (Strategy)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the next statement of strategy will be produce by London Regional Transport; and what public consultation there will be.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport is required by the London Regional Transport Act 1984 to prepare and publish every three years a statement of strategy after consultation with the railways board, the local authorities concerned, the passengers' committee, and such other persons as it may think fit. The next such statement is to be published by June 1988. The nature of any public consultation on the statement and precise timing are matters for LRT.

Bus Deregulation (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies into the effects of deregulation of bus services in Greater London are currently being carried out *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by outside consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has commissioned no studies by consultants into the effects of deregulation in Greater London. The Department has a programme of monitoring deregulation outside London: the first report was published in January of this year.

British Rail Stations (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail stations there are in the Greater London area; how many are open only at peak times; how many are open only from Monday to Friday; how many are closed on Saturdays; and how many are closed on Sundays.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall write to the hon. Member when I have the information.

British Transport Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport, how many British Transport police were employed in each of the years 1977 to 1987 on *(a)* London Regional Transport and *(b)* Southern region of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Transport police have provided the following figures:

Year-end	*LRT*	*BR Southern Region*
1977	125	n/a
1978	141	n/a
1979	139	n/a
1980	161	n/a
1981	279	n/a
1982	284	193
1983	272	191
1984	248	196
1985	271	205
1986	327	206
1987 (March)	325	214

Note: Separate figures for BR Southern Region are not available for 1977 to 1981.

Fishing Vessels (Loss Inquiries)

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for increasing the number of public inquiries held *(a)* when fishing vessels are lost or *(b)* when there are deaths at sea in connection with fishing vessles.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In deciding whether to order a formal investigation into a shipping casualty my right hon. Friend will take into account: the number of lives lost; the degree of public concern; the desirability for the cause to be more clearly established; the likelihood that there are lessons to be learnt; and the possible need for disciplinary action against the master or a member of the crew. The decision is made on the individual facts of each casualty and to project a trend would be inappropriate.

Fishing Vessels (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many deaths there were on United Kingdom fishing vessels during the periods 1975 to 1980 and 1981 to 1985 arising from personal accidents.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number of deaths on United Kingdom fishing vessels from personal accidents was 88 for the period 1975-80 and 50 for the period 1981-85. These figures include those recorded as "missing at sea" but exclude those resulting from casualties to vessels.

Vessel Losses

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what change there has been in the number of vessels lost below 12 m in length during the periods 1975 to 1980 and 1981 to 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number of fishing vessels less than 12 m in length recorded in the Department's annual publication "Casualties to Vessels and Accidents to Men" as lost in the periods 1975-80 and 1981-85 are 40 and 102 respectively. (Until 1978 records list these casualties in terms of gross tonnage and not length and a ship of 20 gross tons has been taken to approximate to one of 12 m). During this period the number of ships at risk has increased by about 40 per cent.

Car Imports (Type Approval)

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has concluded his review of the terms of the personal import exemption from the national type approval requirements for cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government have decided to make no change in the present arrangements. This will enable consumers to continue to have the widest choice about where to buy their cars.

I advise people intending to buy abroad to confirm with the manufacturer or his agent that the car meets our safety and environmental standards. That will be most readily evident if it has been type approved for use in this country.

Navigational Aids

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has undertaken into future developments in navigational aids.

Mr. Moore: In April last year my right hon. Friend invited Dr. D. G. Kiely, a consultant electronics engineer, to undertake a study into developments in marine navigational aids in relation to users' long-term requirements. I have now received Dr. Kiely's report and I am arranging for its publication. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House. I am grateful to Dr. Kiely for undertaking this task and I am sure his conclusions and recommendations will command wide attention. I will be considering them most carefully and I would welcome views on them from all the interested parties.

ENVIRONMENT

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which borough councils have been consulted in respect of the master building agreement between the London Docklands Development Corporation and the developers of Canary wharf.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 25 March at column *164*.

Housing

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have received ministerial visits from his Department in the last six months in connection with housing matters.

Mr. John Patten: There are 367 housing authorities in England. In the last six months, Ministers from the Department of the Environment have made visits to the following local authorities connected with housing matters.

Bracknell
Broxtowe
Cambridge
Daventry
Havering
Kensington and Chelsea
Kettering
Lewisham
Manchester
Nottingham
Pendle
Redditch
Rushcliffe
Solihull
South Tyneside
Stratford
Thamesdown
Wandsworth
Westminster
Wolverhampton

British Waterways

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the level of Government funding to the British Waterways Board in each year since 1979; and what has been the percentage change in each year in constant prices.

Mr. John Patten: The table shows the British Waterways Board's external financing limit, which covers both grant and borrowing, for the years 1979-80-1987-88, together with its expression in 1986-87 prices and the annual and overall percentage changes on this constant price base.

	EFL (cash)	*EFL (1986-87 prices)*	*Annual percentage change*	*Overall percentage change*
	£m	*£m*		
1979-80	25·7	42·8	—	—
1980-81	30·0	42·1	−1·6	—
1981-82	31·6	40·4	−4·0	—
1982-83	39·3	46·9	+16·1	—
1983-84	40·8	46·6	−0·6	—
1984-85	42·8	46·8	+0·4	—
1985-86	44·1	45·4	−3·0	—
1986-87	45·0	45·0	−0·9	—
1987-88	45·0	43·1	−4·2	+0·7

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the full list from which he selected Bradwell, Elstow, Fullbeck and Killingholme as sites for testing for suitability for receiving low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave in reply to a question by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 6 April at column *29*.

Sewerage and Water Supply Building Projects

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total national financial provision for sewerage and water supply building projects in the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested was presented to Parliament in January 1987 by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the White Paper. "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90" Cm. 56-II.

Households (Power Supplies)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has to how many households live in local authority accommodation which has only an electricity supply and no gas supply.

Mr. Tracey: Based on information from the "Family Expenditure Survey", an estimated 1·65 million local authority and new town tenants in Great Britain had electricty in their homes but not a gas supply in 1985.

Satellite Television (Antenna)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking an amendment to planning regulations to increase the permitted size of a satellite antenna to enable people in the north to install an antenna of sufficient size to receive satellite television without recourse to planning permission.

Mr. Tracey: From time to time we receive representations from different parts of the country seeking an increase in the size of satellite antennas which are permitted by the general development order. We consider that the present size limit of 90 cm for such antennas permitted by the GDO is appropriate given the possible environmental effect of an uncontrolled proliferation of larger dishes, but we shall continue to monitor the situation carefully.

Hampstead Heath

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to accept the proposal from the City of London to be given responsibility for Hampstead Heath; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Decisions on the future ownership and management of Hampstead Heath will be taken only after the London residuary body has put forward recommendations following its current consultation on the four options.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost to the taxpayer this year of increasing the proportion of local authority relevant expenditure in England met by Exchequer grant to 60 per cent.

Mr. Chope: If English local authorities were spending at the level consistent with that contained in the 1987-88 RSG Settlement approved by the House on 25 March, and 60 per cent. of this was met by Exchequer grant (the same level as in 1979), the cost to the taxpayer would be equivalent to the yield of about an additional 3·5p on the standard rate of income tax. It seems that actual relevant expenditure is likely to be somewhat higher, so the cost would probably be nearer 4p.

If the taxpayer had been obliged to underwrite 60 per cent. of whatever local authorities had chosen to spend over the years since 1979, local authorities would probably have spent more, and the cost to the taxpayer in 1987-88 would be greater still.

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each individual London local authority net current expenditure per head of population in 1978-79 and in 1985-86, and the percentage increases in net current expenditure per head of population between 1978-79 and 1985-86 in cash and in real terms.

Mr. Chope: This information is as follows:

Net current expenditure per head 1978-79 to 1985-86

	Expenditure per head 1978-79 £	*Expenditure per head 1985-86* £	*Percentage change in current expenditure (cash terms)*	*Percentage change in current expenditure (real terms)*
Greater London CL	36	93	158·3	36·8
City of London	2,760	12,122	339·2	132·4
Camden	162	483	198·1	57·8
Greenwich	109	279	156·0	35·4
Hackney	138	385	179·0	47·5
Hammersmith and Fulham	152	322	111·8	12·2
Islington	163	340	108·6	10·4
Kensington and Chelsea	129	251	94·6	2·9
Lambeth	148	355	139·9	26·8
Lewisham	123	266	116·3	14·2
Southwark	171	411	140·4	27·2
Tower Hamlets	187	403	115·5	14·2
Wandsworth	129	235	82·2	−3·7
Westminster	162	370	128·4	20·9
Barking and Dagenham	213	379	77·9	−6·0
Barnet	194	344	77·3	−6·3
Bexley	206	350	69·9	−10·0
Brent	254	587	131·1	22·3
Bromley	188	320	70·2	−9·9
Croydon	193	351	81·9	−3·8
Ealing	221	414	87·3	−1·0
Enfield	190	332	74·7	−7·5
Haringey	262	606	131·3	22·4
Harrow	195	351	80·0	−4·9
Havering	200	355	77·5	−6·1
Hillingdon	233	369	65·5	−12·6
Hounslow	213	417	95·8	3·5
Kingston-upon-Thames	190	338	77·9	−5·8
Merton	210	324	54·3	−18·4
Newham	236	589	149·6	32·1
Redbridge	182	340	86·8	−1·2
Richmond-upon-Thames	185	329	77·8	−6·0

	Expenditure per head 1978-79 £	Expenditure per head 1985-86 £	Percentage change in current expenditure (cash terms)	Percentage change in current expenditure (real terms)
Sutton	177	321	81·4	−4·2
Waltham Forest	220	466	111·8	12·0
ILEA	173	380	119·7	16·2

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will now answer the question to which a holding reply was given on 21 January at column 590 concerning rate support grant.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *421*]: The figures for 1987-88 requested at items *(a)* and *(b)* of the question have been placed in the Library. They include an adjustment for the costs of the teachers' pay settlement. The figures for 1978-79 have not been provided as grant was not paid on a comparable basis. The figures provided at *(c)* and *(d)* refer to 1981-82, the earliest year for which grant was paid on a comparable basis to 1987-88. The figures at *(e)* represent the percentage change in grant per head from 1981-82 to 1987-88 expressed as a percentage of the 1981-82 figures.

Notes

Rate Support Grant comprises Block Grant and Domestic Rate Relief Grant.

The figures for 1981-82 are final entitlements expressed in 1986 prices using the GDP deflator. In 1981-82 Metropolitan police and GLC entitlements were paid to the rating authorities in their areas.

The figures for 1987-88 are based on estimates of authorities' entitlements to grant following the first supplementary report which is expected to be laid before the House after Easter. The estimates, which are provisional, are on the basis of the expenditure figures provided by local authorities on form BG14, adjusted where necessary to include estimates of the cost of the teachers' pay settlement. Figures for London boroughs include abolition-related LRES receipts.

In addition to the adjustments requested, the 1987-88 figures for the London boroughs and the districts of Broxbourne, Elmbridge, Epping Forest, Epsom and Ewell, Hertsmere, Reigate and Banstead, Spelthorne and Welwyn Hatfield include a proportion of the Receiver for the Metropolitan police district's rate support grant. For Broxbourne, Elmbridge, Epping Forest, Hertsmere, Reigate and Banstead and Welwyn Hatfield this grant has been distributed on the basis of estimates of the population of the parts of each council's area which fall within the Metropolitan police area.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Investment Income (Disaggregation)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost in 1987-88 of taking the investment income of husbands and wives separately, including occupational pensions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret the delay in answering this question. The revenue cost would depend on the detailed tax rules and on any consequential behavioural effects such as the transfer of assets between spouses. If the only changes to the tax rules were to allow the existing wife's earned income allowance against both the wife's investment income and category B state retirement pension and for the wife to have her own tax rate bands for these sources of income, the direct revenue cost (making no allowance for behavioural effects) would be about £500 million at 1987-88 levels of income. This figure is based on projections from information recorded on the survey of personal incomes, which does not have complete coverage of investment income taxed at source, and could therefore be an underestimate. An occupational pension arising from the wife's employment is treated as the wife's earned income under the current rules and qualifies for the wife's earned income allowance.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the size of the companies in which the managers of personal equity plan funds are concentrating their investments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It has been reported that, as I expected, most of the subscriptions to personal equity plans are invested in shares in the leading 100 British companies. It is, of course, for investors and plan managers to decide what shares are bought. The regulations for personal equity plans allow investment in shares of any United Kingdom company quoted on the stock exchange or dealt with on the unlisted securities market.

Housing Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the price of a three-bedroom semi-detached house in terms of the number of years' average earnings for an adult male in London and in the south-east in 1957, 1967, 1987 and 1986 together with the annual interest payable after tax on the purchase price, assuming a 90 per cent. mortgage and maximum relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Average prices of three-bedroom semi-detached houses are not available. The table gives average house prices for all properties bought with building society mortgages in 1977 and 1986: figures for the earlier years requested are not available. Because of the large number of commuters in the south-east, it is not possible to provide separate estimates for London and the rest of the south-east of house prices related to the earnings in each locality.

London and the South East

	Average house price[1] £	*Ratio of house price to earnings*[2]	*Annual net interest on 90 per cent. mortgage*[3] £
1977	16,540	3·85	1,080
1986	50,375	4·16	4,213

[1] *Source:* Department of Environment's survey of building society mortgages at completion stage.
[2] Average gross weekly pay of full time males on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence, in April each year; source: New Earnings Survey.
[3] Assuming 11 per cent. interest rate in 1977 with tax relief at 34 per cent. and 11·5 per cent. interest rate in 1986 with tax relief at 29 per cent. on the first £30,000.

Company Cars

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of the value of petrol purchased by businesses for *(a)* their own use and *(b)* that of their employees in 1986-87; what was the value of the benefit paid to the directors and to higher-paid employees; how much of this was subject to the scale charge; and what is his estimate of the amount of revenue from income tax and national insurance contributions in 1987-88 due from assessments under the same charge.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that the value of petrol purchased by sectors other than the personal sector was about £2·4 billion in 1985, the latest year for which information is available. This estimate includes purchases by companies and the public sector but excludes unincorporated businesses. I regret that information about the use of petrol purchased is not available.

The taxable value of any free fuel provided for the private use of a director or higher paid employee is determined by reference to a set of scale charges and does not depend on the amount of fuel provided. It is estimated that, in 1987-88, the taxable value of free fuel provided for private use will be £450 million leading to an income tax yield of around £160 million. The provision of free fuel for private use does not affect national insurance contributions.

Maturity Loans and Home Income Plan Mortgages

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking amendment of the law so that interest as well as capital on maturity loans and on home income plan mortgages can be rolled up during the lifetimes of the borrowers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has received representations about tax relief on the interest on loans to purchase life annuities taken out by elderly home owners and secured on their homes. Repayment arrangements on such loans, including any provision for rolling up interest, are matters for agreement between the lender and the borrower.

Small Businesses

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the need to obtain a European Community derogation for the proposed scheme of value added tax cash accounting for small businesses will affect the timing of legislation and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: As my right hon. Friend announced in his Budget Statement on 17 March, he proposes to introduce the facility of cash accounting for businesses with an annual turnover not exceeding £250,000 on 1 October 1987, and the Government's request for a derogation from the sixth VAT directive to permit this was notified to the European Commission on Budget day. The Finance Bill, published today, contains in clause 10 powers for the Commissioners of Customs and Excise to make detailed regulations to implement the cash accounting scheme. In order to ensure compliance with European Community law these regulations will not be made until the EC derogation has been approved. Later this month I shall be placing in the Library a draft of the regulations in time to assist the House in its detailed consideration of the Finance Bill provisions.

Taxation

Mrs. Roe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* the number of married women whose investment income was assessed to tax as that of their husbands' during the tax years 1982-83, 1983-84, and 1984-85, *(b)* the total gross income so assessed in each year and *(c)* the tax received thereon.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 March 1987, c. *387*]: The Surveys of Personal Income for the years specified indicate that about 1 ½ million married women had investment income amounting to some £1¼ billion per annum on which the tax due would be about £500 million. This calculation treats the wife's investment income as the top slice of the couple's joint income. In practice, these figures underestimate the full amounts, because the surveys do not provide comprehensive coverage of investment income on which the liability to basic rate tax has been satisfied at source.

Married Women (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by personal category and range of income for elderly and for other taxpayers the gross and net cost to the Exchequer of separate taxation, without aggregation, of married women in the coming financial year on the assumption that each spouse has a transferable allowance equal to the single allowance and that the wife's earned income allowance will be abolished; and how much of the loss would be in respect of higher rate tax on earned income and of standard rate and higher rate tax, respectively, on unearned income.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *40*]: The table shows the effects for married couples, at 1987-88 income levels, of transferable allowances at the levels for single persons proposed in the 1987 Budget. Further analyses could only be provided at disproportionate expense.

Effect of Transferable Allowances[1] at 1987-88 Income levels

Total Income (lower limit) £ per week	*Paying less tax* *Numbers* *thousands*	*Annual tax change £ million*	*Paying more tax* *Numbers* *thousands*	*Annual tax change £ million*	*Annual tax change £ million*
Married Couples aged under 65—both earning					
Under 60	—	—	—	—	—
60-100	30	−5	20	—	−5
100-150	90	−15	270	+70	+55
150-200	140	−20	530	+155	+135
200-300	250	−35	1,790	+580	+545
300-400	90	−10	1,460	+510	+500
Over 400	130	−45	1,070	+340	+295
All	730	−130	5,140	+1,655	+1,525
Married Couples aged under 65—one earning					
Under 60	—	—	10	—	—
60-100	210	−35	10	+5	−30
100-150	620	−170	70	+15	−155
150-200	910	−255	50	+10	−245
200-300	1,550	−440	40	+10	−430
300-400	500	−145	10	—	−145
Over 400	390	−195	10	—	−195
All	4,180	−1,240	200	+40	−1,200
Married Couples aged 65 and over					
Under 60	—	—	—	—	—
60-100	140	−10	—	—	−10
100-150	440	−120	90	+20	−100
150-200	200	−60	90	+20	−40
200-300	140	−50	100	+10	−40
300-400	50	−20	40	+5	−15
Over 400	80	−90	50	+10	−80
All	1,050	−350	370	+65	−285
All Groups	5,960	−1,720	5,710	+1,760	+40

[1] At £2,425 for non-aged and with age allowances of £2,690 for aged 65-79 and £3,070 for aged 80 and over.

Wife's Earned Income Allowance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the numbers and estimated cost of the wife's earned income allowance in the next financial year by range of the wife's income and of the joint incomes of husband and wife.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *40*]: The latest estimates are given in the tables. They are based on a projection from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional. They exclude wives who have no Inland Revenue tax record because their earnings are below the PAYE reporting limit.

Numbers and cost of the wife's earned income allowance, 1987-88 by range of wife's income[1]

Wife's income[1] *lower limit (£ pa)*	*Number of earning wives*[2] *('000s)*	*Cost of wife's earned income allowance*[3] *(£ million)*
1	960	105
1,000	1,010	385
2,000	1,150	700
3,000	830	550
4,000	590	390
5,000	560	385
6,000	600	415
7,000	380	265
8,000	280	200
9,000	170	135
10,000	300	265
12,000	170	165
15,000	70	75
20,000	20	30
30,000	10	15
All ranges	7,100	4,080

[1] Wife's total earned income.
[2] All married women with earned income benefit from the wife's earned income allowance. The figures exclude those with earnings below the PAYE reporting limit and self-employed wives making a net loss.
[3] Including personal allowance claimed by wives with separate earnings election.

Numbers and cost of the wife's earned income allowance, 1987-88 by range of joint total income of husband and wife[1]

Joint total income[1] *lower limit (£ pa)*	*Number of earning wives*[2] *('000s)*	*Cost of wife's earned income allowance*[3] *(£ million)*
1	20	0
1,000	30	0
2,000	70	0
3,000	110	0
4,000	200	15
5,000	220	55
6,000	220	90
7,000	240	110
8,000	280	125
9,000	330	160
10,000	770	390
12,000	1,300	725
15,000	1,720	1,035
20,000	1,120	830
30,000	470	545
All ranges	7,100	4,080

[1] Total income for income tax purposes
[2] All married women with earned income benefit from the wife's earned income allowance. The figures exclude those with earnings below the PAYE reporting limit and self-employed wives making a net loss.
[3] Including personal allowance claimed by wives with separate earnings election.

Gross Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the distribution of gross incomes in the coming financial year by range of income in steps of £1,000 to £20,000 and £5,000 to £50,000 divided between elderly and other taxpayers and between single persons and one-earner and two-earner households.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *216*]: The latest available estimates are given in the table. They are based on a projection from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional. In order to provide reliable estimates some of the requested income ranges have been combined.

Distribution of total income[1] *1987-88*

Numbers

Range of total income Lower limit (£ pa)	*Tax units aged under 65*			*Tax units aged over 65*		
	Single people	*Married couples without wife's earned income*	*Married couples with wife's earned income*	*Single people*	*Married couples without wife's earned income*	*Married couples with wife's earned income*
	('000s)	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*
1,000[2]	1,120	170	30	30	20	5
2,000[2]	1,150	290	60	480	30	10
3,000	900	160	70	360	120	30
4,000	900	190	100	220	210	110
5,000	1,070	240	140	140	220	90
6,000	910	280	140	100	110	80
7,000	810	310	170	90	90	70
8,000	690	380	210	60	80	60
9,000	560	370	280	50	40	50
10,000	800	820	700	60	60	70
12,000	500	860	1,230	60	40	70
15,000	320	570	1,650	40	40	70
20,000	100	190	710	20	20	50
25,000	50	100	340	10	10	10
30,000	40	110	380	10	20	20
50,000	20	50	70	5	10	10

[1] Total income for income tax purposes.
[2] Excluding those who have no Inland Revenue tax record because their earnings are below the PAYE reporting limit.

VAT Inputs Frauds

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is able to give the latest information with regard to the precise or estimated amounts of value added tax inputs frauds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c.*76*]: Amounts of value added tax input frauds are not recorded separately from those for output tax, and the information could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Central Office of Information (Survey Research)

Mr. Gregory asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the sum expended on survey research by the Central Office of Information in each year since 1982.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *76-7*]: The amount spent by the Central Office of Information on all research in connection with the planning, execution and evaluation of Government publicity was:

	£
1982-83	408,000
1983-84	589,000
1984-85	591,000
1985-86	911,000
1986-87	1,924,000

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of investment, capital consumption and net investment each year in manufacturing industry since 1970.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *629*]: Figures of gross domestic fixed capital formation, capital consumption and net domestic fixed capital formation for manufacturing industries are given in the table. These figures do not include capital goods leased to manufacturers from financial lessors. Figures of capital consumption and net domestic fixed capital formation in 1986 are not yet available.

Acquisition and consumption of fixed assets by manufacturing industries

£ million

	Gross domestic fixed capital formation	*Capital consumption*	*Net domestic fixed capital formation*
1970	2,089	1,188	901
1971	2,102	1,375	727
1972	1,968	1,534	434
1973	2,356	1,759	597
1974	3,062	2,170	892
1975	3,458	2,771	687
1976	3,910	3,369	541
1977	4,730	3,996	734
1978	5,624	4,591	1,033
1979	6,515	5,272	1,243
1980	6,478	6,241	237
1981	5,318	6,854	−1,536
1982	5,480	7,302	−1,822
1983	5,854	7,664	−1,810
1984	7,341	8,016	−675
1985	7,950	8,601	−651
1986	8,334	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. = not available.

Personal Incomes (Budget Effects)

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide for 1987 the same information provided in his reply of 27 October 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *53-6*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *216*]: The information is in the tables.

Gains (£ per week), net of indexation, from the main income tax proposals [1] in all Budgets from 1979 to 1987, at 1987-88 income levels

	Multiples of Average Earnings [2]						
	¼	*½*	*1*	*1½*	*2*	*5*	*10*
Single Person (Non-aged)							
change in:—							
basic rate[3]	4·03	7·43	10·84	17·65	20·65	20·65	20·65
personal allowances	2·35	2·35	2·35	2·35	3·56	5·91	5·91
reduced rate band	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46
higher rates and thresholds	—	—	—	—	2·62	100·90	362·30
Total[4]	3·91	7·31	10·73	17·54	25·21	131·03	392·45
Married man (Non-aged)							
change in:—							
basic rate [3]	2·44	5·85	9·26	16·08	20·65	20·65	20·65
personal allowances	3·74	3·74	3·74	3·74	5·11	9·42	9·42
reduced rate band	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46	−2·46
higher rates and thresholds	—	—	—	—	2·62	100·90	362·30
Total [4]	3·72	7·14	10·54	17·36	25·92	128·51	389·90

[1] Excluding abolition of investment income surcharge.
[2] Full time adult males (all occupations) forecast earnings for 1987-88 £227·30 per week.
[3] Assuming changes to personal allowances, the reduced rate bands and the higher rate thresholds are made first.
[4] The sum of the component changes may vary by a penny from the total change given due to rounding.

Gains (£ per week) from the main income tax proposals in the 1987 Budget

	Multiples of Average Earnings [1]						
	¼	*½*	*1*	*1½*	*2*	*5*	*10*
Single Person (Non-aged)							
Current Prices: change in							

	Multiples of Average Earnings[1]						
	½	¾	1	1¼	2	5	10
basic rate [2]	1·34	2·47	3·61	5·88	6·88	6·88	6·88
personal allowances	0·50	0·50	0·50	0·50	0·78	1·04	1·04
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	1·67	1·67	1·67
Total [3]	1·83	2·98	4·11	6·38	9·34	9·59	9·59
Net of indexation: change in basic rate [2]	1·34	2·47	3·61	5·88	6·88	6·88	6·88
personal allowances	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	−0·67	−4·71	−4·71
Total [3]	1·34	2·47	3·61	5·88	6·21	2·17	2·17
Married Man (Non-aged)							
Current Prices: change in							
basic rate [2]	0·81	1·95	3·08	5·36	6·88	6·88	6·88
personal allowances	0·78	0·78	0·78	0·78	1·08	1·61	1·61
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	1·48	1·67	1·67
Total [3]	1·59	2·73	3·86	6·14	9·44	10·17	10·17
Net of indexation: change in							
basic rate [2]	0·81	1·95	3·08	5·36	6·88	6·88	6·88
personal allowances	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
higher rate thresholds	—	—	—	—	—	−4·71	−4·71
Total [3]	0·81	1·95	3·08	5·36	6·88	2·17	2·17

[1] Full time adult males (all occupations) forecast earnings for 1987-88 £227·30 per week.
[2] Assuming changes to personal allowances and higher rate thresholds are made first.
[3] The sum of the changes may vary by a penny from the total given due to rounding.

Unearned Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for those of working age the income distribution by tax category of those with an unearned income of more than £200 and £500 a year, respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *214*]: Information for 1986-87 is given in the tables. The estimates are based on a projection from the 1984-85 "Survey of Personal Incomes" and are therefore provisional. Since the survey does not provide comprehensive coverage of investment income on which the liability to basic rate tax has been satisfied at source, the estimates for the ranges other than the higher income ranges are likely to be incomplete.

Distribution of total income[1], 1986-87
for single people and married couples under 65 with an investment income of more than £200 per annum
Number of incomes ('000s)

Total income[1] lower limit (£ p.a.)	Single people	Married couples without wife's earned income	Married couples with wife's earned income
2,000	290	40	30
5,000	110	70	50
7,000	160	120	110
10,000	60	60	90
12,000	80	80	160
15,000	80	80	370
20,000	60	100	370
30,000	20	70	190
50,000	10	30	50

[1] Gross income for income tax purposes.

Distribution of total income[1], 1986-87
for single people and married couples under 65 with investment income of more than £500 per annum
Number of incomes ('000s)

Total income[1] lower limit (£ p.a.)	Single people	Married couples without wife's earned income	Married couples with wife's earned income
2,000	230	30	20
5,000	80	30	40
7,000	100	80	70
10,000	40	30	70
12,000	60	50	110
15,000	70	60	250
20,000	50	80	280
30,000	20	60	160
50,000	10	30	40

[1] Gross income for income tax purposes.

Company Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1957-58, 1967-68, 1977-78 and the latest financial year for which figures are available the total amount of tax paid by companies and the components, including the amounts deducted by way of tax on dividends, selective employment tax, national insurance contributions and national insurance surcharges, together with a forecast for the outturn in the current financial year and a forecast for the next financial year on the basis of profits earned to date.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *396*]: No estimates are available for total taxes paid by companies. Figures for taxes on company incomes were published in *Economic Trends* annual supplement (January 1987); Table 168 contains annual figures back to 1955 and Tables 169 to 172 have quarterly figures back to 1960. Advance corporation tax paid on dividends is shown separately in these tables. Figures for capital taxes paid by companies are published in "National Income" Blue Book table 9.6 for 1975 onwards on a calendar year basis.

Latest estimates for 1986-87 and forecasts for 1987-88 for receipts of corporation tax and petroleum revenue tax, which together account for virtually all of taxes on income and capital paid by companies, were given in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", table 6B.3.

Official statistics for taxes on expenditure and national insurance contributions do not separately identify those taxes paid by companies.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each quarter since 1 January 1986 the percentage increase in *(a)* import unit values for finished manufactures, *(b)* output prices for United Kingdom manufactures and *(c)* the trade-weighted average reduction in the exchange rate.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

(a) Imports of finished manufactured goods[1]

Unit value indices *1980 = 100*[2]

		Percentage change over previous quarter
1985		
Q4	142	—
1986		
Q1	147	+3·5
Q2	147	+0·0
Q3	150	+2·0
Q4	158	+5·3

[1] Finished manufactured goods consist of sections 7 and 8 of the Standard International Trade Classification (Revision 2).
[2] OIS basis, not seasonally adjusted.

(b) Output price indices[1]

Home sales of manufactures[1] *1980 = 100*

		Percentage change over previous quarter
1985		
Q4	141·4	—
1986		
Q1	143·4	+1·4
Q2	145·7	+1·6
Q3	146·3	+0·4
Q4	147·4[2]	+0·8

[1] Manufactures consist of divisions 2 to 4 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.
[2] Provisional.

(c) Sterling effective exchange index *1975 = 100*

		Percentage change over previous quarter
1985		
Q4	79·9	—
1986		
Q1	75·1	−6·0
Q2	76·1	+1·3
Q3	71·9	−5·5
Q4	68·2	−5·1

Frogs' Legs

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the amount and volume of imported frogs' legs for the latest convenient period; if he will give figures for each country of origin; and what conditions are imposed by United Kingdom authorities on the methods of slaughter.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is not available. Frogs' legs are not separately identified in the United Kingdom *Overseas Trade Statistics*.

Blowpipe Missiles

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to investigate the appearance of Blowpipe missiles in Afghanistan in contravention of end user certificates.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not the practice to comment on individual defence equipment export matters.

Butane Gas

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to make the sale of butane gas canisters to minors illegal; what information he has as to the extent of butane gas sniffing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: If the Government banned the sale of butane gas cannisters to minors, they would simply turn to other products which are just as harmful. Sniffing gas cannisters tends to be confined to hardened sniffers, but, like most solvent sniffing, it appears to be on the increase. The answer I believe lies in educating young people as to the folly of sniffing and parents and teachers to watch for the tell-tale signs, and by prohibiting the sales of sniffable products if the purchasers appear to be buying them to sniff.

Satellites

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *362*, if he will list those *(a)* United Kingdom or *(b)* United Kingdom collaborative communication satellites which remain live in a technical sense; and what was the purpose of each such satellite.

Mr. Pattie: The only United Kingdom communications satellite that is still technically "live" is MoD's SKYNET IIB. This suffered a partial failure some years ago, with the result that its orbital position can no longer be controlled. However, it is still technically capable of relaying military telecommunications traffic between stations that happen to be within its field of view.

The United Kingdom also has an interest in communications satellites developed by the European Space Agency. These were developed under collaborative arrangements and manufactured by the United Kingdom and other member nations. They comprise the orbital test satellite, (OTS 2), the European communications satellite, (ECS 1 and 2), and the maritime ECS, (Marecs B2). The ECS and Marecs satellites are developments of the original OTS technology demonstrator satellite, and have now been leased to the Eutelsat and Inmarsat organisations for operational use. Although currently "retired", OTS is still capable of carrying telecommunications traffic.

Post Office

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response the Post Office has made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the Post Office's procurement activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I have now received the initial response of the Post Office to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report published in October last year on the Post Office's procurement activities (Cmnd. 9912). I am placing copies of the Post Office's response in the Library of the House. The commission reached 52 conclusions and made 49 practical recommendations on various aspects of Post Office procurement, including purchasing in the Post Office's supply department and in its regions, stock management, procurement of particular produces and services and the financial arrangements and staffing of the Post Office's procurement function.

The Post Office has accepted all but one of the commission's recommendations. Because many of these covered areas where the Post Office was making improvements or was planning to do so, it has been able to implement many of the commission's recommedations already. My Department has agreed a detailed timetable with the Post Office for implementation of the remaining recommendations and has also agreed that the Post Office will prepare progress reports in October 1987 and October 1988 on action taken and results achieved.

One recommendation, which relates to arrangements for paying advertising agencies, was partially rejected by the Post Office. This matter is still under consideration in consultation with the commission.

I am satisfied that the Post Offie is taking the commission's recommendations seriously and is making good progress on their implementation.

I should like to take this opportunity to convey the Government's gratitude to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for its thorough and valuable investigation.

Business and Technical Advisory Services

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of his Department's business and technical advisory services.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's business and technical advisory services offer small and medium-size firms with up to 500 employees grants towards the costs of employing expert consultants to advise on projects to improve productivity, design, quality management and marketing.

They were first introduced in 1977 to cover productivity projects. The Department built on the experience of this by introducing similar assistance for consultancy in design and quality management in 1983 and for marketing in September last year. These newer elements are aimed at improving the competitiveness of our products internationally. We are being urged by industry to do more to help improvements in these areas, particularly as regards marketing where response to the launch of the new BTAS element last year has been well over 1,000 applications so far in less than six months. We shall be increasing substantially the funds available for the marketing element in order to meet that demand.

Our general policy on assistance schemes is to operate them only so long as is necessary for improvement and momentum in a particular area to be generated and sustained by industry itself. After 10 years of running the productivity element of BTAS, we now feel that stage has been reached in respect of productivity.

Consequently, the productivity element of BTAS will close at midnight tonight after which no new applications will be accepted. Commitments in relation to existing applications will however be honoured.

In recent years BTAS productivity assistance has been working with the grain of other economic factors which have led to major productivity gains by United Kingdom industry. Since 1979 manufacturing productivity has increased by over 3¼ per cent. a year, a considerable improvement on the average annual growth rate of ¾ per cent. between 1973 and 1979. And, whereas in the 1970s the United Kingdom was at the bottom of the international league table, since 1979 manufacturing productivity growth has been greater in the United Kingdom than in any other major industrial country.

A full evaluation of the productivity element has been carried out by the Department's assessment unit. The main findings of the evaluation report, which will be published in due course, are that the productivity element of BTAS: had completed over 10,000 projects helping small and medium size firms up to September 1985 (the number to date is now nearer 17,000); has brought clear, quantifiable productivity benefits to a high proportion of the firms assisted; has encouraged more positive attitudes among small and medium size firms to using productivity consultants.

The Department will therefore now concentrate BTAS assistance on helping small and medium-sized firms put more effort into design, quality management and marketing. These factors are particularly relevant to the United Kingdom's business and trade prospects at this time when world economic factors now see us favourably placed to exploit United Kingdom competitiveness in markets both at home and abroad.

Assistance towards consultancy under other DTI schemes in the area of advanced manufacturing technology and the application of micro electronics will also continue to be available.

Although this means there will no longer be BTAS grants towards the costs of consultancy projects on productivity, we are considering with PERA arrangements whereby advice on the selection and use of outside consultants for such projects can continue to be made available to small and medium-size firms who need it.

We will also continue to promote awareness of the potential for productivity gains by publicising more widely some of the cases which have been so successful under BTAS."

Lloyd's (Committee of Inquiry)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the results of his discussions with Lloyd's on the consideration and implementation of the report of the committee of inquiry into regulatory matters at Lloyd's.

Mr. Channon: The Council of Lloyd's welcomed the report and accepted, on the day of publication, the changes recommended in the composition of the council; these have since been implemented. This new council will oversee the implementation of the remainder of the report, for which Lloyd's has since drawn up detailed plans. The chairman of the Council of Lloyd's, with whom I have had

discussions on these matters, has recently sent me me a memorandum setting out their approach to, and proposed timetable for, implementation. I have placed this memorandum in the Library.

For their part, the Government accept the recommendation that Lloyd's should be exempted from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 in a similar way to other institutions, to enable it to seek information about spent convictions and is discussing the details with Lloyd's. Lloyd's has so far shown determination to act promptly and have made some progress. I shall expect this progress to continue, so that the substance of the report will be implemented speedily, as planned, over the next two years. The Government believe that full and complete implementation of the report should provide Names with broadly comparable protection to that given to investors under the Financial Services Act. I shall continue to follow most carefully progress in this important matter and to keep the House informed.

SCOTLAND

Small Businesses

4. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures his Department is taking to assist small and medium-sized firms in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government fully recognise the important role of small and medium sized firms, and have successfully brought about an economic environment favourable to enterprise. Small firms in Scotland benefit from a wide range of national and Scottish schemes of support. The Chancellor's recent Budget statement included further valuable measures to assist small firms.

Clydesdale Works, Belleshill

14. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the chairman of the British Steel Corporation to discuss the suggested merger between the Clydesdale works, Belleshill and a French company.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the chairman of the British Steel Corporation on 26 February. There are no plans for a further meeting in the immediate future but we shall continue to meet on a regular basis, to discuss matters affecting the steel industry in Scotland.

Lochs and Rivers (Acidification)

15. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary State for Scotland if he will the list those lochs and rivers in Scotland that are showing signs of acidification.

Mr. Ancram: A great deal of monitoring and measurement of the acid status of lochs and rivers in Scotland is currently being carried out. The results of this work will appear in due course in various publications, in particular the report of the United Kingdom acid waters review group, which is expected in about 18 months' time. There would be no purpose in attempting to produce a list of acidified areas in Scotland before the publication of this report.

Jordanhill College of Education

16. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to retain secondary teacher training in Gaelic at Jordanhill college of education.

Mr. John MacKay: Following consultations last year on the rationalisation of postgraduate secondary pre-service teacher training courses, I decided that for the academic sessions 1987-88 to 1989-90 Gaelic should be offered alternately by the Northern and Jordanhill colleges of education. Provision for that subject will accordingly require to be maintained by both colleges.

Rents

17. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about increasing the powers of rent officers to intervene in order to prevent excessive rents being charged by private landlords.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations to this effect only from the hon. Member.

Nurses

18. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the problems of recruitment, training, and wastage of nursing staff in the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Since this Government came into office the whole-time equivalent number of qualified nurses has risen by 7,494. This represents an increase of nearly 28 per cent. over the 1979 total of 26,930, although part of the increase was necessitated by the reduction in working hours in 1980 from 40 to 37·5 per week.

In this same period student nurse numbers have increased by 16 per cent. the increase being about 22 per cent. for general nursing and 30 per cent. for mental handicap. For mental health and maternity the number remained about the same.

The number training to become enrolled nurses has fallen by about 62 per cent. between 1979 and 1985.

Information on wastage is not readily available centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The Scottish Home and Health Department has commissioned a research study of career pathways for cohorts of nurses trained in Scotland over the past 30 years. This should be completed by the end of this year and will provide much useful information on career progression, wastage, return to work and future intentions.

Woodilee Hospital

19. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss the problems of *(a)* Woodilee hospital and *(b)* other psychiatric hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Scottish Home and Health Department officials have already met once with representatives of the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss the problems of the main block of Woodilee

hospital and the Department is represented on the special technical working group which has been set up by the board to assess the cost of bringing the main block back into use. Once that working group has reported, the Department expects to have further discussions with the board about the available options.

The Greater Glasgow health board is also considering a review of its strategy for psychiatric services generally and the Department will also be discussing this with the board in due course.

Forestry

20. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Forestry Commission to discuss broadleaf planting.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet the chairman of the Forestry Commission to discuss this particular topic.

21. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to alter existing practice in the determination of the suitability of land for afforestation.

Mr. John MacKay: The practices followed in determining whether land should be cleared for planting are kept under review. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make an announcement soon regarding the Government's conclusions arising from the Forestry Commission's review of the composition and procedures of its regional advisory committees, which have an important role in seeking to conciliate over disputed grant and felling applications, but has no other changes in mind at present.

25. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy towards further afforestation in the flow country of Sutherland and Caithness.

Mr. John MacKay: Discussions are currently taking place between the Scottish Office, the Forestry Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council about how a reasonable balance between forestry and nature conservation can be achieved in the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland. All applications for planting grants arising in the districts of Caithness and Sutherland, whether within sites of special scientific interest or not, are the subject of consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council, as I announced in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) on 17 February 1987 at column *541*.

34. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to promote afforestation in lowland areas of England and to discourage planting in the flow areas of Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: In addition to the Forestry Commission's present grant schemes, the afforestation of lowland areas in England will be encouraged by the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 9 February 1987 at columns *38-40*. These include the proposed introduction of a farm woodland scheme and an increase in traditional forestry by the release of better quality land than hitherto.

My right hon. and learned Friend is not taking steps to discourage planting in any part of Scotland, but the Commission grant aid planting only after consultations with other relevant land use interests.

Housing Co-operatives

22. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many housing co-operatives are funded by the Housing Corporation and at what annual cost; and if he has any proposals to increase the number of such co-operatives.

Mr. Ancram: The Housing Corporation has registered 20 housing co-operatives in Scotland, all of which are thereby eligible for funding. In 1986-87, in addition to one single co-operative funded at a cost of £0·43 million, the three associations (including two registered co-operatives) in the community ownership programme received £4 million. In the current year, projected expenditure is £0·85 million by two co-operatives and £4·5 million by the associations in the community ownership programme.

The promotion, registration and allocation of funds to individual housing associations are matters for the Housing Corporation. Scottish Office officials are, however, discussing with local authorities, the Housing Corporation and other interests the best means available of meeting local housing aspirations, including proposals to establish further community co-operatives.

Glasgow College of Technology

23. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the reduction in funding for Glasgow college of technology for the year 1987-88.

Mr. John MacKay: The recurrent grant allocation for 1987-88 has been increased by some 6·5 per cent. against the initial allocation for 1986-87.

Regional Parks

24. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on regional parks in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The Countryside (Scotland) Act 1981 gives regional councils the power, by order, to designate land as regional parks. If there are unwithdrawn objections to an order the Secretary of State's confirmation is required.

Two regional parks have so far been designated in Scotland. Designation orders have been made for two others at Loch Lomond and Clyde-Muirshiel, but objections have been submitted against both orders. In the former case it has been agreed to proceed by written submissions and a site inspection by an inquiry reporter, who will recommend to the Secretary of State whether or not the order should be confirmed. No decision on procedure has yet been reached in respect of the proposed Clyde-Muirshiel regional park.

Labour Statistics

26. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the total numbers and percentages of unemployed young males and young females in Scotland; what plans he has to reduce these figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 8 January 1987 (the latest date for which information is available) there were 90,236 unemployed male claimants and 52,203 unemployed female claimants

in Scotland under the age of 25. Because an accurate estimate of the total work force under the age of 25 is not available, unemployment rates by age groups cannot be given.

Our primary objective is to create the conditions in which employment will flourish. The rate of inflation has been brought down, providing a more stable environment for business, and a wide range of measures to assist employment, training, improve incentives and increase flexibility has been introduced. Of the Government employment and training measures the new job training scheme, the extension of the YTS guarantee to all school leavers under 18, the expansion of places available under the enterprise allowance scheme and the introduction last year of the new workers scheme will all be of particular benefit to unemployed young people in Scotland.

Inverclyde Initiative

27. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received on the Inverclyde initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no further representations on the Inverclyde initiative since his meeting with representatives of Inverclyde district council on 23 January, at which the hon. Member was present, except for the hon. Member's letter of 9 March, to which I replied on 3 April.

Salmon

28. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to seek to increase the level of salmon stocks in Scotland's rivers and waterways.

Mr. John MacKay: The enhancement of salmon stocks in Scotland is a matter for district salmon fishery boards. My Department's marine and freshwater fisheries laboratories are currently involved in research into the methods by which stocks may be enhanced and the results of this work are made available to district salmon fishery boards, on request.

The recently established salmon advisory committee has also been asked to examine and advise Ministers on matters relating to the conservation and development of salmon fisheries.

Lung Cancer

29. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the incidence of lung cancer in Glasgow among *(a)* men and *(b)* women is increasing or decreasing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of cases of lung cancer registered in Glasgow among men was 883 in 1975. The corresponding figure for 1984 (the latest year for which data are available) was 843, a slight decrease. However, equivalent figures for women were 268 in 1975 and 418 in 1984. The great majority of these cases—both in men and women—may be attributed to cigarette smoking and demonstrate how much harm results fom this habit.

Rates

30. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Convention of Scottish Local Authorities officials to discuss rates set for 1987-88.

Mr. Rifkind: I discussed the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88 with representatives of the convention on 12 December last year. Local authorities have only recently set their rates for 1987-88. I will be meeting the convention again on 27 April.

Manufacturing Industry

31. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the prospects for manufacturing industry in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Scottish manufacturing industry will benefit from the growth expected in its United Kingdom and world markets. I expect overall manufacturing activity to resume growth after the disappointing fall last year, with some of the newer high technology industries doing particularly well, the continued dearth of orders in the shipbuilding industry remains a major concern.

Torness Power Station

32. **Mr. Campbell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the most recent date for the commissioning of the first unit at Torness generating station.

Mr. Lang: I am advided by the South of Scotland electricity board that it currently expects that fuel loading of the first unit at Torness will begin in mid-1987 to be followed by power raising before the end of 1987.

Alternative Land Use

33. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline details of Government schemes designed to assist alternative crops and land use by farmers in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 6 March. Further details of various schemes of assistance will be announced as soon as possible.

Bail etc. (Scotland) Act 1980

35. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to amend the Bail etc. (Scotland) Act 1980.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Domestic Rates

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how the current product of domestic rates in Scotland and in each of the regions in Scotland might be raised through community charge or local income tax with and without resource equalisation in the cases of *(a)* a single person on 75 per cent. and 100 per cent. of an average manual workers wage, *(b)* a married man on 75 per cent. and 100 per cent. of an average manual worker's wage, whose wife's earnings are an average for women in full-time employment, *(c)* a married man with earnings as in case *(a)* whose wife's earnings are the average for women in part-time employment, *(d)* a married man with earnings as in case *(a)* whose wife has no income, *(e)* a married couple, as

in case *(d)* living with a son or daughter over 8 years of age, whose income is the average for the 18 to 25 year age group in Scotland and *(f)* a married couple as in case *(d)* living with an unemployed son or daughter between 18 and 25 years of age, indicating how these calculations were made.

Mr. Ancram: The estimated average local tax bills under the community charge system and under a local income tax system and without resource equalisation needed to replace domestic rates in 1985-86, are given for the specific cases requested.

(a) A single person on 75 per cent. and 100 per cent. of average earnings for a full-time male adult manual worker in Scotland

Area	Community charges	Equalised local income tax		Unequalised local income tax	
		75 per cent.	100 per cent.	75 per cent.	100 per cent.
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
Borders	158	181	272	130	196
Central	187	214	323	269	405
Dumfries and Galloway	155	176	266	164	247
Fife	210	244	367	181	272
Grampian	157	181	272	130	196
Highland	153	176	266	134	203
Lothian	225	260	393	315	475
Strathclyde	229	265	399	277	418
Tayside	194	223	336	273	412
Scotland	207	239	361	235	355

(b) A married man with earnings as in case (a), whose wife's earnings are the Scottish average for adult women in full-time employment

Area	Community charges	Equalised local income tax		Unequalised local income tax	
		75 per cent.	100 per cent.	75 per cent.	100 per cent.
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
Borders	316	298	390	215	281
Central	374	354	463	444	581
Dumfries and Galloway	310	291	381	270	354
Fife	420	402	526	298	390
Grampian	314	298	390	215	281
Highland	306	291	381	222	290
Lothian	450	430	562	520	680
Strathclyde	458	437	571	458	599
Tayside	388	368	481	451	590
Scotland	414	395	517	388	508

(c) A married man with earnings as in case (a) whose wife's earnings are the average for adult women in part-time employment

Area	Community charges	Equalised local income tax		Unequalised local income tax	
		75 per cent.	100 per cent.	75 per cent.	100 per cent.
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
Borders	316	147	238	106	172
Central	374	174	283	218	355
Dumfries and Galloway	310	143	233	133	216
Fife	420	198	322	147	238
Grampian	314	147	238	106	172
Highland	306	143	233	109	177
Lothian	150	211	344	256	416
Strathclyde	458	215	349	225	366
Tayside	388	181	294	222	360
Scotland	414	194	316	191	311

(d) A married man with earnings as in case (a) whose wife has no income.

Area	Community charges	Equalised local income tax		Unequalised local income tax	
		75 per cent.	100 per cent.	75 per cent.	100 per cent.
	£	£	£	£	£
Borders	316	127	219	91	158
Central	374	150	259	189	325
Dumfries and Galloway	310	124	213	115	198
Fife	420	171	295	127	219
Grampian	314	127	219	91	158
Highland	306	124	213	94	163

Area	Community charges	Equalised local income tax		Unequalised local income tax	
		75 per cent.	100 per cent.	75 per cent.	100 per cent.
	£	£	£	£	£
Lothian	450	183	315	221	381
Strathclyde	458	186	320	195	335
Tayside	388	156	269	192	330
Scotland	414	168	290	165	285

(e) A married couple as in (d) living with a son or daughter over 18 years of age whose income is the average for full-time workers in the 18 to 24 year age group

Area	Community charges	Equalised local income tax		Unequalised local income tax	
		75 per cent.	100 per cent.	75 per cent.	100 per cent.
	£	£	£	£	£
Borders	474	292	384	211	277
Central	561	346	455	435	571
Dumfries and Galloway	465	285	375	265	348
Fife	630	394	518	292	384
Grampian	471	292	384	211	277
Highland	459	285	375	217	286
Lothian	675	421	553	509	669
Strathclyde	687	428	562	448	589
Tayside	582	360	473	441	580
Scotland	621	387	509	380	500

(f) A married couple as in case (d) living with an unemployed son or daughter between 18 and 24 years of age.

Area	Community charges (rebated)	Equalised local income tax		Unequalised local income tax	
		75 per cent.	100 per cent.	75 per cent.	100 per cent.
	£	£	£	£	£
Borders	429	127	219	91	158
Central	488	150	259	189	325
Dumfries and Galloway	422	124	213	115	198
Fife	543	171	295	127	219
Grampian	430	127	219	91	158
Highland	419	124	213	94	163
Lothian	574	183	315	221	381
Strathclyde	584	186	320	195	335
Tayside	507	156	269	192	330
Scotland	536	168	290	165	285

Notes:

(1) The average community charges for 1985-86 used in the tables were published in the *Official Report* on 20 February 1986.

(2) The underlying local income tax rates (with resource equalisation) have been estimated on the assumption that some form of resource equalisation would make the yield of 1p in the pound the same per adult in all areas.

(3) Published information on taxable resources in local authority areas is only available up to 1982-83. The sample size is small and the regional pattern shows considerable variation from year to year. Estimates of local income tax rates without resource equalisation are therefore subject to some uncertainty. Those in the table have been produced by applying the pattern of unequalised tax rates calculated for 1982-83 to 1985-86 average earnings.

(4) Estimates of average gross earnings have been taken from the 1985 "New Earnings Survey". The average figures for Scotland have been used in each case with the exception of average earnings for the 18 to 24 year age group, where only Great Britain figures were readily available.

(5) In applying local income tax rates to cases *(a)* to *(f)* it is assumed that earnings are the only sources of income and that only personal tax allowances apply.

(6) In case *(f)* it has been assumed that the unemployed son or daughter will be in receipt of unemployment benefit.

Police

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total annual cost of the police service in Scotland, with a breakdown for each police force in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year; and how much of that cost was met by (i) Her Majesty's Government and (ii) local authorities.

Mr. Lang: The cost of the police service in Scotland in 1979-80 was £153,813,000 and in 1985-86 it was £288,725,000. Central Government's share of the cost in these years comprised 50 per cent. police grant (from 1986-87 51 per cent., and 50 per cent. of the expenditure on common police services. The remainder of the expenditure was met by local authorities from general revenue comprising rate support grant and rates. A breakdown of expenditure for each police force in 1979-80 and 1985-86 is given in the table:

£000

Force	1979-80 Local Authorities [1]	1979-80 Central Government	1979-80 Total	1985-86 Local Authorities [1]	1985-86 Central Government	1985-86 Total
Central	2,890	2,798	5,688	5,564	5,343	10,907
Dumfries & Galloway	1,708	1,799	3,507	3,397	3,533	6,930
Fife	3,765	3,660	7,425	6,995	6,734	13,729
Grampian	5,497	5,342	10,839	11,197	10,801	21,998
Lothian & Borders	12,878	12,449	25,327	25,916	25,104	51,020
Northern	3,845	3,765	7,610	7,134	6,926	14,060
Strathclyde	40,247	39,091	79,338	72,673	70,147	142,820
Tayside	5,957	5,793	11,750	11,351	10,973	22,324
Central Government's share of Common Police Services	—	2,329	2,329	—	4,937	4,937
	£76,787	£77,026	£153,813	£144,227	£144,498	£288,725

[1] Includes local authorities' share of common police services and other non-police grant earning expenditure.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the number of police officers who were *(a)* charged with criminal offences and *(b)* convicted of criminal offences in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown for each police force.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available centrally in the precise form requested, but the table has been compiled from statistical returns by chief constables. It shows *(a)* the number of cases involving police officers dealt with by procurators fiscal in 1979 and 1986 following reports submitted by forces in respect of officers alleged to have committed offences either on or off duty, and *(b)* the number of these cases which resulted in convictions. The submission of a report to the procurator fiscal does not necessarily imply that the officer had been charged with a criminal offence.

Force	1979 Reports dealt with	1979 Number of reports resulting in convictions	1986 Reports dealt with	1986 Number of reports resulting in convictions
Central Scotland	33	2	25	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	8	2
Fife	22	6	30	3
Grampian	10	2	19	4
Lothian and Borders	42	17	39	14
Northern	36	9	19	3
Strathclyde	139	36	102	37
Tayside	58	13	79	5
SCOTLAND	340	85	321	68

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the number of complaints of criminal conduct by the police and the number of resultant *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* successful prosecutions in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown for each police force.

Mr. Lang: In terms of the Police (Discipline) (Scotland) Regulations 1967, as amended, all reports or allegations from which it may reasonably be inferred that a police officer has committed a criminal offence must be referred to the procurator fiscal. The following table indicates the number of such cases dealt with in 1979 and 1986 which resulted in *(a)* criminal proceedings and *(b)* a finding of guilt.

Force	Complaints, etc. referred to procurator fiscal 1979	Complaints, etc. referred to procurator fiscal 1986	Number of cases resulting in criminal proceedings 1979	Number of cases resulting in criminal proceedings 1986	Number of cases resulting in finding of guilt 1979	Number of cases resulting in finding of guilt 1986
Central Scotland	23	27	—	1	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	8	9	—	—	—	—
Fife	11	30	—	1	—	—
Grampian	12	61	1	1	1	—
Lothian and Borders	145	159	3	—	1	—
Northern	14	17	—	3	—	1
Strathclyde	239	422	1	15	—	6
Tayside	41	66	2	3	2	1
SCOTLAND	493	791	7	24	4	8

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the total local authority expenditure on police as a percentage of all local authority expenditure in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown for each local authority.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table:

Expenditure on the police by regional and island authorities expressed as a percentage of their total expenditure on local authority services

	1979-80	*1985-86*
Central	6·2	7·8
Dumfries and Galloway	7·8	9·1
Fife	7·5	8·0
Grampian	7·0	8·5
Strathclyde	9·0	10·0
Tayside	9·2	10·1
Lothian and Borders	9·5	10·9
Highland, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland	5·5	6·5
All Scotland	8·4	9·5

Notes:

(1) The figures given represent expenditure on the police as a percentage of expenditure by regional and island authorities on local authority services; expenditure by district authorities has not been taken into the calculation.

(2) Expenditure on local authority services is taken as the sum of net current expenditure (excluding loan charges) and net capital expenditure in accordance with public expenditure survey definitions.

(3) Lothian and Borders regions are served by a joint police force; similarly Highland region and the three island authorities are served by a joint force.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the number of occasions and the number of officers involved when police officers were authorised to carry firearms and the number of occasions when firearms were used *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year with a breakdown for each police force.

Mr. Lang: The information available is set out in the table. It should be noted that the basis on which the information was recorded was changed in 1984. Formerly, the total number of occasions on which firearms were issued was shown. This, however, was found to lead to inconsistencies of interpretation since, during any particular operation, a firearm could be issued to an individual officer on more than one occasion. From 1984, therefore, the records show separately the number of operations in which firearms were issued against *(a)* persons known or believed to be armed and *(b)* for the destruction of animals.

Information as to the number of police officers involved on each occasion or in each operation is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Force	*1979 (Occasions)*		*1986 (Operations)*			
	Issued	*Used*	*Issued*		*Used*	
			(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
Central Scotland	10	—	1	3	—	3
Dumfries and Galloway	15	—	12	1	—	1
Fife	5	—	9	—	—	—
Grampian	12	1	11	—	—	—
Lothian and Borders	65	—	18	—	—	—
Northern	19	—	5	—	—	—
Strathclyde	562	1	111	4	1	4
Tayside	11	—	7	—	—	—
Scotland	699	2*(c)*	174	8	1	8

(a) Refers to operations and use against persons known or believed to be armed.
(b) Refers to operations and use for the destruction of animals.
(c) On both occasions firearms were used for the destruction of animals.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the ratio of police officers per head of population in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year with a breakdown for each police force.

Mr. Lang: The estimated population (as at 30 June) per police officer on authorised establishement as at 31 December in each year was as follows:

Force	*1979*	*1986*
Central Scotland	539	489
Dumfries and Galloway	469	441
Fife	525	470
Grampian	504	504
Lothian and Borders	360	353
Northern	437	452
Strathclyde	350	337
Tayside	419	392
Scotland	390	377

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the ratio of police per reported crime in *(a)* 1979, and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year with a breakdown for each police force.

Mr. Lang: The number of reported crimes per police officer on authorised establishement as at 31 December in each year was as follows:

Force	*1979*	*1986*
Central Scotland	27·4	36·8
Dumfries and Galloway	15·9	22·0
Fife	21·8	32·6
Grampian	24·8	37·6
Lothian and Borders	26·5	33·4
Northern	14·7	20·7
Strathclyde	28·0	35·5
Tayside	25·2	35·6
Scotland	26·1	34·2

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether if he will state, for Scotland, the number of police

officers residing in council housing accommodation and in owner occupied accommodation and in other accommodation in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown of the figures for each police force.

Mr. Lang: The information as at 31 December 1986 is set out in the table:

Force	*Police authority[1] accommodation*	*Owner occupied accommodation*	*Other accommodation*	*Total*
Central Scotland	49	432	68	549
Dumfries and Galloway	118	167	53	338
Fife	195	381	149	725
Grampian	307	504	184	995
Lothian and Borders	200	1,786	456	2,442
Northern Constabulary	305	299	6	610
Strathclyde	1,044	4,737	988	6,769
Tayside	182	627	191	1,000
Total	2,400	8,933	2,095	13,428

[1] Includes houses owned by police authority and those rented from local housing authority.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the number of police officers resident within the communities for which they have primary policing responsibility in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown of the figure for each police force in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for each police force in Scotland, the number and location of manned police stations or sub-stations in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown of the figures for each police force in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the authorised establishment and actual numbers of police officers and police cadets and civilian staff in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown for each police force.

Mr. Lang: The information, as at 31 December of each year, is as follows:

Force	*1979 Establishment (Strength)[1] Police*		*Cadets*		*[2]Civilians*		*1986 Establishment (Strength)[1] Police*		*Cadets*		*[2]Civilians*	
Central Scotland	505	(509)	34	(23)	148	(135)	556	(549)	34	(9)	153	(142)
Dumfries and Galloway	305	(311)	18	(15)	95	(84)	333	(338)	18	(7)	111	(101)
Fife	653	(671)	30	(30)	188	(139)	732	(725)	30	(14)	197	(188)
Grampian	920	(932)	35	(22)	257	(239)	997	(995)	35	(18)	310	(311)
Lothian and Borders	2,361	(2,342)	174	(103)	1,014	(778)	2,393	(2,442)	174	(—)	879	(889)
Northern	591	(603)	28	(22)	240	(264)	609	(610)	28	(1)	310	(292)
Strathclyde	6,977	(6,905)	459	(339)	2,235	(1,809)	6,954	(6,769)	459	(—)	1,936	(1,699)
Tayside	962	(941)	39	(33)	271	(250)	1,001	(1,000)	39	(—)	304	(300)
SCOTLAND TOTAL	13,274	(13,214)	817	(587)	4,448	(3,698)	13,575	(13,428)	817	(49)	4,200	(3,922)

[1] Figures in brackets show the actual numbers in post.
[2] Including part-time staff.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state the annual average salary and the average actual earnings and the average amount of rent or housing allowance received by police officers in Scotland in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year.

Mr. Lang: The information requested, in so far as available, is as follows:

	1979-80 £	*1985-86* £
Average annual salary	[1]	10,967
Average annual earnings[2]	6,176	12,038
Average rent allowance[3]	1,276	2,525

[1] Not available separately.
[2] Average annual earnings includes overtime payments.
[3] Average rent allowance is based on the number of officers in receipt of rent allowance as at 31 December 1979 and 1985; other officers occupied rent and rate free accommodation provided by police authorities.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state for each police force in Scotland the location of manned police stations or sub-stations *(a)* closed down and *(b)* opened since 1979.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the total number of

police officer-hours worked (i) in police stations or sub-stations, (ii) in motor vehicles, (iii) on foot patrol and (iv) on other duties *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1986 or the latest available year; and whether he will give a breakdown for each Scottish police force area.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for Scotland, the total number of known crimes and solved crimes in each of the following categories in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* in 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown for each police force area: (i) non-sexual crimes of violence against the person, (ii) sexual crimes of violence against the person, (iii) other crimes involving indecency, (iv) crimes involving dishonesty, (v) vandalism, (vi) other crimes and (vii) road traffic offences.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Crime/Offence Group	*Police Force Area*								
	Central	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Grampian*	*Lothian and Borders*	*Northern*	*Strathclyde*	*Tayside*	*Scotland*
1979: Recorded									
Non-sexual Crimes of Violence	267	70	221	484	1,048	234	7,008	693	10,025
Sexual Crimes of Violence	49	24	69	85	218	30	727	52	1,254
Other Crimes of Indecency	122	49	186	308	531	106	1,892	225	3,419
Crimes of Dishonesty	10,326	3,571	11,011	16,653	52,636	6,374	131,073	17,549	260,193
Fire-Raising, Vandalism etc	2,845	999	2,417	4,624	7,635	1,432	31,281	4,925	56,158
Other Crimes	235	122	353	667	434	535	3,524	781	6,651
Motor Vehicle Offences	9,688	11,306	12,744	16,203	38,191	12,299	86,876	16,649	203,956
1979: Cleared Up									
Non-sexual Crimes of Violence	229	62	208	396	571	227	3,454	558	5,705
Sexual Crimes of Violence	26	19	42	62	67	27	266	28	537
Other Crimes of Indecency	81	41	108	234	255	86	1,129	146	2,100
Crimes of Dishonesty	3,952	1,456	4,651	5,869	15,402	3,642	36,862	5,805	77,659
Fire-Raising, Vandalism etc	694	252	826	1,287	1,560	752	4,841	1,158	11,370
Other Crimes	227	122	352	642	428	535	3,482	777	6,585
Motor Vehicle Offences	9,410	11,306	12,717	16,203	38,191	12,184	86,139	16,644	202,794
1986: Recorded									
Non-sexual Crimes of Violence	543	258	995	910	3,301	295	8,852	949	15,705
Sexual Crimes of Violence	73	29	79	121	236	44	628	91	1,303
Other Crimes of Indecency	200	67	215	481	657	115	2,020	296	4,051
Crimes of Dishonesty	14,728	4,907	16,967	26,278	60,627	8,497	185,150	25,378	342,522
Fire-Raising, Vandalism etc	4,180	1,600	4,586	8,203	10,581	2,127	40,832	6,782	78,891
Other Crimes	722	460	1,386	1,473	4,498	1,353	9,128	2,145	21,365
Motor Vehicle Offences	12,451	10,857	15,474	27,068	35,010	15,688	99,947	21,592	238,087
1986: Cleared Up									
Non-sexual Crimes of Violence	494	229	536	710	2,341	284	5,304	806	10,704
Sexual Crimes of Violence	67	28	57	78	139	43	316	54	782
Other Crimes of Indecency	145	65	139	376	480	108	1,311	212	2,836
Crimes of Dishonesty	6,847	2,577	6,473	7,357	20,483	4,757	46,944	9,805	105,241
Fire-Raising, Vandalism etc	1,458	606	1,305	1,757	2,583	1,134	7,211	1,579	17,643
Other Crimes	717	459	1,385	1,452	4,490	1,553	9,061	2,143	21,260
Motor Vehicle Offences	11,888	10,598	15,468	24,417	35,010	15,623	99,155	21,590	233,749

Note:—"Sexual Crimes of Violence" comprises rape, assault, assault with intent to rape and indecent assault. "Other Crimes of Indecency" includes the remaining crimes in Group 2 of the standard SHHD classification.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Rifkind: The FMI builds on work that was already in hand in the Scottish Office to improve management in the Department, and in related bodies, in accordance with the Government's commitment to improving value for money. Key elements of the arrangements introduced for delegated budget setting and control of departmental running costs and for the management of programme expenditure are described in chapter 2 of "Public Expenditure to 1989-90: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme" which was published on 18 February. Copies are available in the House of Commons Library.

Some of the effects of the FMI are reflected in the targets and output performance measures described in the commentary including, for example, the tightening of staff: student ratios in colleges of Education, and improved effectiveness in fisheries protection activity. Other examples of efforts to ensure better value for money include the development of management information systems in the Scottish prison service, objective appraisal

of trunk road bypass schemes, and an extensive programme of financial management surveys covering a wide range of NDPBs.

Police Surgeons

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police surgeons there are in each of the Scottish police forces; and of these how many are male.

Mr. Lang: I understand that the numbers of police surgeons presently employed or retained by each police authority are as follows:

Force	Male	Female	Total
Central Scotland	5	—	5
Dumfries and Galloway	1	—	1
Fife	6	—	6
Grampian	5	—	5
Lothian and Borders	9	1	10
Northern[1]	15	2	17
Strathclyde[2]	91	6	97
Tayside	24	2	26

[1]Other doctors are available on a payment for call-out basis.
[2]The breakdown by sex is approximate.

As regards the position in Strathclyde police, I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 11 March at column *243*.

Zircon

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has sent to the National Union of Journalists letter of 17 February on the police raid on the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Rifkind: My private secretary replied on my behalf on 12 March.

Green Pound

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the National Farmers Union of Scotland concerning the devaluation of the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I attended the union's annual general meeting dinner on 12 March with my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for Education, Agriculture and Fisheries who addressed the meeting on 13 March and responded to questions from the floor. On both occasions the union's views on the need for a green pound devaluation were made very clear.

The Government are currently involved in this year's common agricultural policy price-fixing negotiations, which include the European Commission's proposals for green currency devaluations and a reform of the agri-monetary system. Our approach to these negotiations reflects our desire to see even-handed and fair treatment between member states of the Community and between individual producers, traders and consumers.

Balmore Industrial Estate, Glasgow

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what follow-up discussions the Scottish Development Agency will be having with the estates department of Glasgow district council over the possibilities of conversion to, and construction of, small industrial units at the Balmore industrial estate, Glasgow.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Territorial Army

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Territorial Army units will go on annual exercises to the British Army of the Rhine in West Germany in 1987; how many went in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: During training year 1987-88 it is intended that 62 Territorial Army units will be deployed to the British Army of the Rhine in West Germany for annual exercises. The corresponding figure for training year 1986-87 was 53.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the proposed reduction of man days for Territorial Army personnel and on the implications for Territorial Army training.

Mr. Freeman: Financial provision has been made for an average of 34 training days per man in the Territorial Army in 1987-88. In addition, provision has been made for 16 paid drill nights, that is, the financial equivalent of a further four training days per man. The minimum training requirement for TA volunteers wishing to qualify for their commanding officer's certificate of efficiency and for their bounty is 27 days for those in independent units and 19 days for specialist units.

Publications

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent by his Department in each of the past five years on publications for *(a)* free distribution and *(b)* sale under £1.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Marconi, Portsmouth (Police Investigation)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will call for a report from his Department's police on their investigation into Marconi at Portsmouth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. Any such report would be made to the prosecuting authorities, if this were appropriate.

Royal Engineers Diving Establishment (Trainees)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the results of the inquiry into the death in 1986 of a Royal Engineers diving establishment trainee on the mudflats at Horsea Island, Portsmouth.

Mr. Freeman: Whilst it is not the Department's policy to publish the findings of service boards of inquiry, I called for a full report on the incident to be prepared and submitted to me following the death of the young soldier last year. This report took into account the findings of the Army's own board of inquiry and the verdict of accidental death returned at the Portsmouth coroner's inquest. The report also detailed what follow-up action needed to be taken. I decided that certain changes should be made to the selection testing procedures for Army diver training.

Firstly, the "mud-run" element of the aptitude test—which I suspended immediately following the death of the soldier—would not be reintroduced. Secondly, the staff to student ratio is not to be more than one to five and all staff are to be briefed before each aptitude test of the dangers of dehydration. The staff are also to be briefed on the symptoms and treatment of heat illness. In addition, the local medical centre is to be informed when endurance training in dry suits is being carried out and a stand-by vehicle is to be available at the location where the tests take place. Finally, training in dry suits is now limited to 30 minutes with a minimum interval of two hours between normal physical training and training in dry suits. In deciding whether any changes should be made, I have taken into account the need for the tests to remain sufficiently demanding to ensure that only suitable candidates are selected for what is a hazardous profession while at the same time reducing as far as possible the risks to the individual. I believe these new rules, all of which are in force, will achieve this aim.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what medical supervision there is of training runs, in particular for Royal Engineers Diving Establishment trainees, whilst wearing diving suits.

Mr. Freeman: All Army diving supervisors at the Royal Engineers diving establishement are trained in first aid and diving-associated illness. At the HMS Vernon site there is a RN leading medical assistant who has specialist training in illness related to diving. In addition, the local medical centre at MHS Nelson provides 24-hour medical cover and is informed on each occasion when endurance training in dry suits is being undertaken by Royal Engineers diving establishment trainees. A standby vehicle is also available at the location on each occasion where endurance training is taking place. The facilities at the Royal Naval hospital Haslar, and in particular the Institute of Naval Medicine, are also available if required.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if runs on mudflats at *(a)* Horsea Island or *(b)* Whale Island in Portsmouth harbour are planned for the summer months for Royal Engineers diving establishment trainees.

Mr. Freeman: There are four Army diving training courses planned to take place at the Royal Engineers diving establishment between early May and late July. Some elements of the training may take place at either Horsea island or Whale island and my include training on mud. In addition, there are two diving aptitude tests planned to take place during this period. Such tests no longer include a run on mud. this element of testing was suspended and will not be introduced following the tragic death last year of a young soldier whilst undergoing aptitude testing.

Marconi, Portsmouth (Mr. Sharif)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence during what periods Mr. Sharif of London E17 worked at Marconi in Portsmouth while employed at Stanmore; if the cost of his transport to Portsmouth by car each week over a period of several months was paid for out of public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Mr. Sharif worked at Marconi Defence Systems at Browns lane, Portsmouth, for three days each week between January and March 1986. The cost of his transport was paid by the company.

Publications

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost of producing publications on aspects of Her Majesty's Government's defence policies in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

"Trident and the Alternatives"

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much it cost his Department to produce the document "Trident and the Alternatives"; how many copies have been printed; what were their production costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley *[pursuant to his reply, 6 April 1987, c. 87]*: My Department has so far printed 6,000 copies of Defence open government document 87/1 "Trident and the Alternatives". The cost of production, which includes the staff costs of production but not for the preparation of the document, was approximately £1,100.

"20 Questions on Defence"

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much it cost his Department to produce the leaflet, "20 Questions on Defence"; how many copies have been printed; what were their production costs; and how many copies have been issued to the public.

Mr. Stanley *[pursuant to his reply, 6 April 1987, c.87]*: My Department, in conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has so far had printed 16,000 copies of the leaflet "20 Questions on Defence". The cost of production, which includes the staff costs of production but not the preparation of the document, was approximately £3,260. Of the 9,830 copies so far distributed, some 260 have gone directly to members of the general public in response to requests for information. The balance have been distributed to Ministers, peers, MPs, United Kingdom MEPs, interested groups, regular recipients of FCO defence and disarmament information material, and NATO and overseas posts. It is assumed that most of these have been, or will be, passed to the public.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Sherman asked the Paymaster General what percentage of 16-year-old school leavers in Kirklees metropolitan borough council area embark on YTS courses broken down into *(a)* girls, *(b)* boys and *(c)* all.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission estimates that 62 per cent. of 16-year-old school leavers entered the YTS in Kirklees local education authority area in 1985-86. The equivalent figure for girls was 55 per cent. and boys 67 per cent.

Mr. Sherman asked the Paymaster General what percentage of 16-year-old *(a)* girls, *(b)* boys and *(c)* all school leavers attend YTS broken down by region or AMB area in each of the last four years.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not currently available in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Member when the information has been collected and collated.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what percentage of 16-year-old *(a)* girls, *(b)* boys and *(c)* all school leavers entered YTS in the last four years.

Mr. Trippier: The table shows estimates by the Manpower Services Commission of the number of 16-year-old school leaver entrants to YTS in the years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 expressed as a percentage of the number of 16-year-old school leavers. Figures for 1986-87 are not yet available.

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Boys	51	58	58
Girls	43	49	49
Total	46	53	54

Note: Not all school leavers enter the labour market directly. In 1985-86 it is estimated that around 20 per cent. of school leavers went on into further education. The figures therefore understate the proportion of 16-year-olds who leave full-time education and join YTS.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what measures have been taken since 1985 to reduce the under-occupancy of youth training scheme places.

Mr. Trippier: Since the introduction of YTS in 1983 the MSC has established a well structured and organised planning process which is continually refined in the light of experience to achieve an appropriate mix of places and provision for each particular year.

Flexibility of provision, however, is an essential feature of a demand-led scheme and is always needed to meet the guarantee to unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds, to provide a choice of places for young people and to cater for the needs of special groups.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received regarding the cost of meals for YTS trainees.

Mr. Trippier: I have received two representations concerning meals for YTS trainees. The weekly training allowance payable to YTS trainees is intended to cover normal living expenses, including meals.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, from the survey of the YTS providers last reported to the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board, the number and proportion of trainees who are *(a)* one-year trainees only, *(b)* apprentices or other long-term trainees, and *(c)* employees; and how these figures have changed since 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the form requested. The most recent information is from the YTS providers survey conducted in January-February 1986. This survey showed that 9 per cent. (23,800) of trainees were apprentices or long-term trainees and 14 per cent. (37,000) were employees. Some young people were apprentices with employee status.

Figures for 1985 are not available.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will gave the proportion of youth training scheme leavers going to the following destinations for each available month of the 15 per cent. leavers sample and for each of the previous sample *(a)* full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* part-time work, *(d)* full-time college or training course, *(e)* back to school, *(f)* on another youth training scheme, *(g)* claimant unemployed and *(h)* other; and if he will show for each survey: (i) the proportion of respondents who had left the scheme early and (ii) the usable percentage response rate.

Mr. Trippier: The figures are not available in the form requested.

The available results from the surveys of leavers between April 1983 and March 1985 are as follows:

Survey descriptions	*April 1983—October 1983 10 per cent. of those leavers notified to MSC by October 1983*	*April 1983—March 1984 10 per cent. of leavers in 9 selected area offices*	*April 1984—July 1984 10 per cent. of leavers in 9 selected area offices*	*June 1984—March 1985 15 per cent. national follow-up of YTS leavers*
In full-time work with the same employer	4	13	22	24
In full-time work with a different employer	34	37	34	31
Part-time work	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
Full-time course	6	1	2	3
On another YTS	29	12	3	6
Doing something else	3	3	5	3
Unemployed	24	33	34	32
Percentage early leavers	84	89	60	52
Percentage response	53	53	69	63

[1] This question was not asked.
[2] Although no question was asked about part-time work, 1 per cent. of respondents noted their questionnaires to indicate that they were in part-time work.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers last reported to the meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board the number and proportion of managing agents who deploy, per 100 trainees *(a)* fewer than three, *(b)* three to five, *(c)* six to eight, *(d)* nine to 11, *(e)* 12 to 14 and *(f)* more than 14 full-time equivalent staff in managing, administering and providing off-the-job training for their scheme; and how these figures have changed over the last two years.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. The most recent survey of YTS providers conducted in January-February 1986

shows that 44 per cent. (2,400) of scheme managing agents and sponsors had up to 10, 13 per cent. (700) had between 10 and 15 and 43 per cent. (2,400) had in excess of 15 full-time equivalent staff per 100 trainees engaged in management and off-the-job training.

Comparable figures for earlier periods are not available.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers last reported to the meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board, the number and proportion of managing agents and sponsors who require prospective trainees to have one or more O-levels; and how these figures have changed over the last two years.

Mr. Trippier: The most recent survey of YTS providers conducted in January-February 1986 showed that 18 per cent. (1,000) of schemes required trainees to have a minimum of one O-level pass.

A similar survey conducted in June-August 1984 showed that 22 per cent. (1,300) of managing agents or sponsors required at least one O-level pass.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme leavers last reported to the meeting of the youth training board, the number and proportion of work experience placements provided in each of the industrial categories used in the survey, and in each of the occupational training facilities, together with the comparable figures for two years ago.

Mr. Trippier: The following table shows results from the most recent survey of TYS providers conducted in January-February 1986 and the previous survey conducted in June-August 1984.

Trainees receiving placements in:	*1984*		*1986*	
	per cent	*Number*	*per cent*	*Number*
Standard Industrial Classification				
0. Agriculture, forestry, fishing	2	5,300	2	5,300
1. Energy and Water	0	—	2	5,300
2. Extraction, metals, minerals, chemicals	4	10,600	1	2,600
3. Metal goods, engineering, vehicles	12	31,900	7	18,500
4. Other manufacture	6	15,900	7	18,500
5. Construction	5	13,300	3	7,900
6. Distribution, hotel & catering, repairs	40	106,300	23	60,700
7. Transport and Communication	1	2,600	2	5,300
8. Banking, finance etc	5	13,200	5	13,300
9. Other services	22	58,500	48	126,700
Not stated	3	8,000	0	—

Comparable data on occupational training families are not available from the two surveys. The table gives the proportion of workplaces covered by the 1986 providers survey with trainees in occupations classified by the training and occupations (YTS) classification. The figures sum to more than 100 per cent. as workplaces often have trainees in more than one occupation.

	Percentage
Administration and clerical	44
Creative, education recreation	13
Health and community	8
Personal service	18
Selling and storage	28
Construction	7
Electrical engineering	8
Mechanical engineering	12
Mining	[1]
Motor vehicle repair	12
Non-metal processing	4
Catering and food	13
Agriculture, horticultre and forestry	6
Fishing	[1]
Transport	3
Scientific	1
Printing	3
Clothing and textiles	2
Security services	[1]
Other	[1]
DK/NS	[1]

[1] Less than 1 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General to what factors he attributes the current under-occupancy of youth training scheme places.

Mr. Trippier: Flexibility in the provision and take-up of YTS places will always be required if the scheme is to meet the needs of all those who are involved. The current level of occupancy is in line with the normal annual pattern of contracting and filling of places. There were over 320,000 young people in training on YTS at the end of February 1987.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to ensure that monitoring of youth training schemes is adequate to prevent managing agents getting into arrears with trainees' allowances.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission already has staff in its area offices whose purpose is to ensure good and correct practice in the spending of public money on YTS including the trainees' allowances.

These staff carry out financial monitoring visits to managing agents to ensure that they operate sound financial systems and controls. In the course of these visits, managing agents' records are examined to ensure that allowances are being paid correctly and on time. Additionally, a selection of trainees are interviewed to verify that their allowances are being paid properly.

The depth and frequency of monitoring is determined by the managing agents' past and present performance in fulfilling the terms of their contracts with the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme leavers last reported to the meeting of the youth training board, the number and proportion of managing agents and sponsors who sub-contract (i) no, (ii) some and (iii) all work experience placements to other employers and providers together with the comparable figures for two years ago.

Mr. Trippier: This information is available from the survey of YTS providers conducted in January-February 1986 and June-August 1984. The table gives the proportion and number of YTS schemes in which none, some and all of the work experience placements are sub-contracted.

	1984	1986
No sub-contracting per cent.	28	35
Number	1,600	1,900
Some sub-contracting per cent.	28	35
Number	1,600	1,900
All work experience sub-contracted per cent.	43	30
Number	2,500	1,700

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, from the survey of youth training scheme providers last reported to the meeting of the Manpower Services Commission's youth training board, the number and proportion of schemes that accept *(a)* all applicants, *(b)* more than three quarters of all applicants, *(c)* more than half of all applicants and *(d)* more than a quarter of all applicants, respectively, together with the comparable figures for two years ago.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The table gives the proportion and number of schemes accepting trainees. This information is drawn from surveys of YTS providers conducted in January-February 1986 and June-August 1984.

Schemes accepting	1984 Per cent.	1984 No.	1986 Per cent.	1986 No.
All applicants	34	2,000	34	1,900
More than 50 per cent. of applicants	66	3,800	73	4,000
More than 20 per cent. of applicants	83	4,800	90	5,000

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many young people in training on the youth training scheme are estimated to be employees on current year schemes; how these figures compare with the previous year and the year before that; and what the figures are for the two year scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The table shows the number of young people recorded by the Manpower Services Commission as employees starting on YTS in each of the years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86. No information is yet available on the number of employees starting on the two-year scheme.

Number of young people starting as employees on YTS

	No.
1983-84	16,500
1984-85	22,500
1985-86	23,000

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the 1986 incidence of major and fatal accidents to trainees on the youth training schemes, together with the figures for the two previous years and the figures thus far for 1987.

Mr. Tippier: The following tables set out the annual incidence rates per 100,000 trainees on YTS for fatal and major accidents. Table *(a)* gives figures for 1984 and 1985. Table *(b)* gives figures for 1986. It should be noted that the two tables cannot be directly compared in respect of major injuries. Up to 31 March 1986 major injuries were classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980. From 1 April 1986 major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985. This has had the effect of reclassifying some accidents from the minor category into the major category. Accident figures for the first quarter of 1987 are not yet available.

Period	Average number in training	[1] Accidents: Fatalities	[1] Accidents: Major Injuries	Annual Incidence Rate per 100,000 trainees: Fatalities	Annual Incidence Rate per 100,000 trainees: Major Injuries
Table (a)					
1 January 1984 to 31 December 1984	262,877	[2]4	190	1·5	72·3
1 January 1985 to 31 December 1985	265,596	[3]4	201	1·5	75·7
Table (b)					
1 January 1986 to 31 December 1986	304,103	[4]7	305	2·3	100·3

[1] Manpower Services Commission accident figures for YTS are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, Commission figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the executive had the individuals been employed.

[2] This figure includes two road traffic accidents.

[3] This figure includes one road traffic accident.

[4] This figure includes two road traffic accidents.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish, for each area office of the Manpower Services Commission, current accident figures for the youth training scheme in the following form *(a)* for the area for each of the last three available months, together with the figures for the previous year, *(b)* by travel-to-work area for the last available month, together with the figures for the previous year, *(c)* by parliamentary constituency for the last available month, together with the figures for the previous year and *(d)* by local authority for the last available month, together with the figures for the previous year.

Mr. Trippier: Youth training scheme accident statistics are collected quarterly and relate to areas covered by Manpower Services Commission offices. Figures for October 1985 to December 1986 are given in the following tables. Comprehensive information is not available for travel-to-work areas, parliamentary constituencies or local authority districts and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1
YTS accidents 1 October to 31 December 1986[1]

Region and area	Fatalities	Major injuries[2]	Minor injuries
Scotland			
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	—	1	8
Central and Fife	—	3	8
Glasgow City	—	2	7
Grampian and Tayside	1	2	10
Highlands and Islands	—	2	2
Lanarkshire	—	2	10
Lothian/Borders	—	5	9
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	—	1	3
Northern			
Cleveland	—	—	—
Durham County	—	3	38
Newcastle	—	—	26
South Tyne	—	5	25
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees	—	5	19
Humberside	—	3	17
Leeds/North Yorkshire	—	1	—
Sheffield/Rotherham	—	—	6
Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster	[3]1	5	15
North West			
Cheshire	—	9	15
Cumbria	—	1	2
Greater Manchester Central	—	3	2
Greater Manchester East	—	1	—
Greater Manchester North	—	—	16
Lancashire	—	3	36
Merseyside Inner	—	3	15
Merseyside Outer	—	1	23
West Midlands			
Birmingham	—	7	16
Coventry	—	—	—
Dudley/Sandwell	—	2	10
Staffordshire	—	1	7
Telford/Shropshire	—	—	8
Hereford and Worcester			
Wolverhampton	—	1	16
East Midlands and Eastern			
Derbyshire	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	2	6
Lincolnshire	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	1	6
Bedfordshire/Cambridge	—	1	2
Norfolk/Suffolk	—	—	—
Wales			
Cardiff	—	2	32
Gwent	—	1	12
Swansea	—	1	2
Wrexham	1	2	12
South West			
Avon	—	3	8
Devon and Cornwall	—	1	4
Gloucester and Wiltshire	1	1	15
Taunton/Somerset/Dorset	—	3	6
South East			
Chatham Kent	—	—	6
Chelmsford	—	5	9
Fareham	—	—	3
High Wycombe	—	—	1
Horsham	—	2	6
Reading	—	2	3
London			
London North	—	—	—
London North East	—	1	5
London South East	—	—	2
London South and West	—	—	—
Totals	4	100	509

Table 2
YTS accidents 1 July to 30 September 1986[1]

Region and area	Fatalities	Major injuries[2]	Minor injuries
Scotland			
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	6
Central and Fife	—	1	6
Glasgow City	—	4	6
Grampian and Tayside	—	—	3
Highlands and Islands	—	—	—
Lanarkshire	—	1	2
Lothian/Borders	—	1	4
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	—	1	—
Northern			
Cleveland	—	2	5
Durham County	—	7	18
Newcastle	—	5	16
South Tyne	—	1	14
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees	—	2	12
Humberside	—	—	—
Leeds/North Yorkshire	—	2	3
Sheffield/Rotherham	—	1	6
Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster	—	3	4
North West			
Cheshire	—	3	12
Cumbria	—	—	—
Greater Manchester Central	—	2	3
Greater Manchester East	—	1	1
Greater Manchester North	—	7	14
Lancashire	—	3	9
Merseyside Inner	—	2	6
Merseyside Outer	—	2	14
West Midlands			
Birmingham	—	—	13
Coventry	—	—	2
Dudley/Sandwell	—	1	1
Staffordshire	—	1	4
Telford/Shropshire	—	—	5
Hereford/Worcester			
Wolverhampton	—	1	2
East Midlands and Eastern			
Derbyshire	—	—	1
Leicestershire	—	1	5
Lincolnshire	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	2	7
Bedfordshire/Cambridge	—	—	3
Norfolk/Suffolk	—	3	1
Wales			
Cardiff	—	3	15
Gwent	—	—	—
Swansea	—	4	5
Wrexham	—	—	3
South West			
Avon	—	1	2
Devon and Corwall	—	3	4
Gloucester and Wiltshire	—	—	2
Taunton/Somerset/Dorset	—	1	8
South East			
Chatham Kent	—	—	2
Chelmsford	—	—	4

Region and area	Fatalities	Major injuries[2]	Minor injuries
Fareham	—	—	—
High Wycombe	—	—	4
Horsham	—	—	—
Reading	—	1	3
London			
London North	—	—	—
London North East	—	3	5
London South East	—	1	1
London South and West	—	—	—
Totals	—	77	266

Table 3
YTS accidents 1 April to 30 June 1986[1]

Region and area	Fatalities	Major injuries[2]	Minor injuries
Scotland			
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	10
Central and Fife	—	3	11
Glasgow City	—	1	5
Grampian and Tayside	—	—	7
Highlands and Islands	—	1	2
Lanarkshire	—	5	12
Lothian/Borders	—	2	5
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	—	—	7
Northern			
Cleveland	—	1	10
Durham County	—	1	19
Newcastle	—	—	15
South Tyne	—	1	15
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees	—	1	11
Humberside	—	—	6
Leeds/North Yorkshire	—	3	6
Sheffield/Rotherham	—	1	9
Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster	—	—	15
North West			
Cheshire	—	1	8
Cumbria	—	2	4
Greater Manchester Central	—	1	2
Greater Manchester East	—	2	5
Greater Manchester North	—	2	12
Lancashire	—	3	10
Merseyside Inner	—	1	11
Merseyside Outer	—	1	13
Midlands			
Birmingham	—	5	4
Coventry	—	1	1
Derby	—	4	5
Dudley/Sandwell	—	—	5
Leicestershire	—	—	3
Lincoln	—	1	1
Nottingham	—	2	3
Staffordshire	—	—	5
Telford/Shropshire/ Hereford and Worcester	—	—	4
Wolverhampton	—	—	7
Wales			
Cardiff	—	1	12
Gwent	—	—	8
Swansea	—	4	10
Wrexham	1	2	19
South-West			
Avon	1	2	7
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—
Gloucester and Wiltshire	—	1	8
Taunton/Somerset/Dorset	—	—	3
South East			
Chatham Kent	1 [3]	1	2
Chelmsford	—	1	3
Fareham	—	1	5
High Wycombe	—	—	7
Horsham	—	2	4
Ipswich	—	3	7
Luton	—	1	5
Reading	—	1	3
London			
London North	—	—	1
London North East	—	1	—
London South East	—	1	1
London South and West	—	—	2
Totals	3	68	375

Table 4
YTS accidents 1 January to 31 March 1986[1]

Region and area	Fatalities	Major injuries[2]	Minor injuries
Scotland			
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	11
Central and Fife	—	2	18
Glasgow City	—	—	7
Grampian and Tayside	—	1	5
Highlands and Islands	—	—	—
Lanarkshire	—	3	17
Lothian/Borders	—	2	3
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	—	—	7
Northern			
Cleveland	—	1	9
Durham County	—	2	21
Newcastle	—	1	19
South Tyne	—	2	11
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees	—	—	10
Humberside	—	—	7
Leeds/North Yorkshire	—	3	14
Sheffield/Rotherham	—	—	14
Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster	—	1	16
North West			
Cheshire	—	—	2
Cumbria	—	—	9
Greater Manchester Central	—	2	8
Greater Manchester East	—	1	12
Greater Manchester North	—	2	14
Lancashire	—	5	15
Merseyside Inner	—	1	7
Merseyside Outer	—	—	16
Midlands			
Birmingham	—	3	11
Coventry	—	1	17
Derby	—	2	10
Dudley/Sandwell	—	3	2
Leicestershire	—	1	8
Lincoln	—	—	9
Nottingham	—	—	12
Staffordshire	—	2	7
Telford/Shropshire/ Hereford and Worcester	—	3	9
Wolverhampton/Walsall	—	—	7
Wales			
Cardiff	—	2	16
Gwent	—	—	4
Swansea	—	2	12

Region and area	Fatalities	Major injuries[2]	Minor injuries
Wrexham	—	2	11
South West			
Avon	—	2	9
Devon and Corwall	—	—	4
Gloucester and Wiltshire	—	2	7
Taunton/Somerset/Dorset	—	1	8
South East			
Chatham Kent	—	—	4
Chelmsford	—	1	8
Fareham	—	—	6
High Wycombe	—	1	3
Horsham	—	—	4
Ipswich	—	1	4
Luton	—	—	3
Reading	—	—	—
London			
London North	—	—	2
London North East	—	1	—
London South East	—	—	4
London South and West	—	1	1
Totals	—	60	474

Table 1
YTS accidents 1 October to 31 December 1985[1]

Regions and area	Fatalities	Major injuries[2]	Minor injuries
Scotland			
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	—	1	7
Central and Fife	—	1	20
Glasgow City	—	1	15
Grampian and Tayside	—	1	9
Highlands and Islands	—	1	2
Lanarkshire	—	4	9
Lothian/Borders	—	2	8
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll	—	—	10
Northern			
Cleveland	—	2	21
Durham County	—	3	31
Newcastle	—	1	22
South Tyne	—	1	16
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees	—	2	14
Humberside	—	4	4
Leeds/North Yorkshire	—	1	23
Sheffield/Rotherham	—	1	8
Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster	—	5	12
North West			
Cheshire	—	—	15
Cumbria	—	—	2
Greater Manchester Central	—	1	6
Greater Manchester East	—	4	12
Greater Manchester North	—	2	12
Lancashire	—	2	30
Merseyside Inner	—	3	12
Merseyside Outer	—	—	16
Midlands			
Birmingham	—	—	22
Coventry	—	1	11
Derby	—	—	15
Dudley/Sandwell	—	—	4
Leicestershire	—	—	14
Lincoln	—	—	8
Nottingham	—	—	12
Staffordshire	—	4	15
Telford/Shropshire / Hereford and Worcester	—	—	9
Wolverhampton/	—	—	4
Wales			
Cardiff	—	3	19
Gwent	—	1	5
Swansea	—	—	8
Wrexham	—	—	9
South West			
Avon	—	2	7
Devon and Cornwall	—	1	7
Gloucester and Wiltshire	—	—	13
Taunton/Somerset/Dorset	—	1	6
South East			
Chatham Kent	—	1	5
Chelmsford	—	—	12
Fareham	—	2	4
High Wycombe	—	2	2
Horsham	—	—	10
Ipswich	—	1	5
Luton	—	—	2
Reading	—	1	3
London			
London North	—	1	1
London North East	—	2	2
London South East	—	—	5
London South and West	—	1	2
Totals	—	67	577

[1] Manpower Services Commission (MSC) accident figures for YTS are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on employed persons. However, MSC figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the HSE had the individuals been employed.

[2] Up to 31 March 1986 major injuries were classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980. From 1 April 1986 major injuries were classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

[3] These figures are road traffic accidents.

YTS

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish, for each Manpower Services Commision area office and for *(a)* 16-year-olds, *(b)* 17-year-olds and *(c)* 18-year-olds, the latest careers service estimates of the number and proportion expected to leave school and further education college, and the number and proportion expected to find work outside the youth training scheme by 31 December; and how these figures have changed from those available at the end of 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The figures supplied in the tables refer to the numbers of young people leaving school. Results are missing from a few Manpower Service Commission areas due to incomplete returns from some local education authorities. Information on the number of leavers from colleges of further education is not readily available.

Table 1: Results of the careers service exercise by MSC area office: December 1985

Area	*Total eligible to leave school*	*Number of school leavers*	*School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.*	*Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS*	*School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.*	*Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.*
South East						
Chatham, Kent						
Age 16	21,663	10,832	50·0	4,874	45·0	22·5
Age 17	6,615	2,051	31·0	1,231	60·0	18·6
Age 18	4,092	1,269	31·0	1,142	90·0	27·9
Chelmsford						
Age 16	21,721	12,918	59·5	6,692	51·8	30·8
Age 17	6,885	2,650	38·5	1,969	74·3	28·6
Age 18	4,279	1,840	43·0	1,767	96·0	41·3
Fareham						
Age 16	22,179	12,050	54·3	5,161	42·7	23·2
Age 17	5,508	1,859	33·8	1,147	61·7	20·8
Age 18	3,653	1,552	42·5	1,386	89·3	37·9
High Wycombe						
Age 16	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age 17	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age 18	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Horsham						
Age 16	27,797	12,545	45·1	7,277	58·0	26·2
Age 17	11,620	3,459	29·8	1,911	55·2	16·4
Age 18	7,290	1,875	25·7	1,806	96·3	24·8
Reading						
Age 16	17,406	8,996	51·7	4,810	53·5	27·6
Age 17	5,550	1,543	27·8	906	58·7	16·3
Age 18	3,571	862	24·1	804	93·3	22·5
London						
London North						
Age 16	17,239	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age 17	8,366	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age 18	4,905	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
London North East						
Age 16	20,595	11,627	56·5	5,484	47·2	26·6
Age 17	6,483	2,562	39·5	1,308	51·1	20·2
Age 18	3,159	1,338	42·4	897	67·0	28·4
London South East						
Age 16	22,282	11,656	52·3	5,887	50·5	26·4
Age 17	7,623	2,925	38·4	1,580	54·0	20·7
Age 18	3,904	1,507	38·6	1,030	68·3	26·4
London South and West						
Age 16	21,411	8,397	39·2	5,196	61·9	24·3
Age 17	8,056	2,273	28·2	1,597	70·3	19·8
Age 18	4,624	1,457	31·5	1,261	86·5	27·3
South West						
Avon						
Age 16	12,589	7,379	58·6	2,642	35·8	21·0
Age 17	3,853	1,079	28·0	647	60·0	16·8
Age 18	2,546	738	29·0	610	82·7	24·0

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Devon and Cornwall						
Age 16	19,673	10,457	53·2	3,019	28·9	15·3
Age 17	4,372	778	17·8	444	57·1	10·2
Age 18	3,095	548	17·7	413	75·4	13·3
Gloucester/Wiltshire						
Age 16	15,106	8,845	58·6	3,772	42·6	25·0
Age 17	3,377	784	23·2	474	60·5	14·0
Age 18	2,685	1,022	38·1	822	80·4	30·6
Taunton/Somerset/Dorset						
Age 16	14,264	8,613	60·4	3,326	38·6	23·3
Age 17	3,577	1,233	34·5	843	68·4	23·6
Age 18	2,595	669	25·8	561	83·9	21·6
West Midlands						
Birmingham						
Age 16	19,543	10,480	53·6	2,346	22·4	12·0
Age 17	5,022	851	16·9	366	43·0	7·3
Age 18	3,128	584	18·7	472	80·8	15·1
Coventry/Warwick						
Age 16	12,562	6,874	54·7	1,834	26·7	14·6
Age 17	2,845	834	29·3	283	33·9	9·9
Age 18	2,255	616	27·3	400	64·9	17·7
Dudley/Sandwell						
Age 16	9,883	6,378	64·5	1,053	16·5	10·7
Age 17	1,728	558	32·3	147	26·3	8·5
Age 18	1,244	453	36·4	176	38·9	14·1
The Marches						
Age 16	15,383	8,300	54·0	2,361	28·4	15·3
Age 17	3,821	958	25·1	328	34·2	8·6
Age 18	2,584	545	21·1	357	65·5	13·8
Staffordshire						
Age 16	16,160	10,471	64·8	1,471	14·0	9·1
Age 17	3,697	782	21·2	278	35·6	7·5
Age 18	2,612	1,216	46·6	727	59·8	27·8
Wolverhampton						
Age 16	9,040	4,860	53·8	961	19·8	10·6
Age 17	2,134	646	30·3	234	36·2	11·0
Age 18	1,436	379	26·4	241	63·6	16·8
East Midlands and Eastern						
Derby						
Age 16	14,140	8,004	56·6	1,946	24·3	13·8
Age 17	2,675	320	12·0	160	50·0	6·0
Age 18	2,207	530	24·0	441	83·2	20·0
Leicestershire						
Age 16	21,455	12,074	56·3	5,653	46·8	76·3
Age 17	6,720	2,076	30·9	1,400	67·4	20·8
Age 18	3,860	1,211	31·4	1,034	85·4	26·8
Lincoln						
Age 16	8,198	4,724	57·6	1,224	25·9	14·9
Age 17	1,900	275	14·5	130	47·3	6·8
Age 18	1,320	315	23·9	245	77·8	18·6
Nottingham						
Age 16	16,077	9,325	58·0	2,733	29·3	17·0
Age 17	3,296	824	25·0	396	48·1	12·0
Age 18	2,561	691	27·0	512	74·1	20·0
Luton						
Age 16	15,149	7,553	49·9	3,584	47·5	23·7
Age 17	4,783	1,113	23·3	795	71·4	16·6

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Age 18	2,835	804	28·4	720	89·6	25·4
Ipswich						
Age 16	18,502	11,064	59·8	4,142	37·4	22·4
Age 17	4,547	1,121	24·7	620	55·3	13·6
Age 18	2,981	1,384	46·4	767	55·4	25·7
Yorkshire and Humberside						
Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees						
Age 16	16,676	10,217	61·5	3,179	31·1	19·1
Age 17	4,670	1,353	29·0	714	52·8	15·3
Age 18	2,893	1,123	38·8	617	54·9	21·3
Humberside						
Age 16	14,006	9,020	64·4	2,275	25·2	16·2
Age 17	3,546	1,109	31·3	479	43·2	13·5
Age 18	2,500	625	25·0	425	68·0	17·0
Leeds/North Yorkshire						
Age 16	20,190	10,744	53·2	4,172	38·8	20·7
Age 17	6,140	1,703	27·7	903	53·0	14·7
Age 18	3,984	1,038	26·1	690	66·5	17·3
Sheffield/Rotherham						
Age 16	12,851	8,019	62·4	1,103	13·8	8·6
Age 17	3,390	797	23·5	201	25·2	5·9
Age 18	2,302	628	27·3	388	61·8	16·9
Wakefield/Barnsley, Doncaster						
Age 16	13,709	9,136	66·7	1,742	19·1	12·7
Age 17	2,682	790	29·5	292	37·0	10·9
Age 18	1,602	509	31·8	283	55·6	17·7
North West						
Cheshire						
Age 16	14,619	8,038	55·0	1,770	22·0	12·1
Age 17	4,362	918	21·0	337	36·7	7·7
Age 18	3,077	563	18·3	362	64·3	11·8
Cumbria						
Age 16	7,582	5,046	66·6	2,096	41·5	27·6
Age 17	1,831	428	23·4	244	57·0	13·3
Age 18	1,298	333	25·6	227	68·2	17·5
Greater Manchester Central						
Age 16	13,072	7·524	57·6	1,862	24·7	14·2
Age 17	3,671	653	17·8	281	43·0	7·7
Age 18	2,906	841	28·9	520	61·8	17·9
Greater Manchester East						
Age 16	11,479	6,575	57·3	1,799	27·4	15·7
Age 17	3,455	734	21·1	455	62·0	13·2
Age 18	2,028	705	34·8	607	86·1	30·0
Greater Manchester North						
Age 16	15,400	9,337	60·6	1,955	20·9	12·7
Age 17	3,463	823	23·8	318	38·6	9·2
Age 18	2,636	605	23·0	256	42·3	9·7
Lancashire						
Age 16	21,034	11,574	55·0	3,714	32·1	17·7
Age 17	2,983	478	16·0	160	33·5	5·4
Age 18	2,420	680	28·1	400	58·9	16·5
Merseyside Inner						
Age 16	12,274	7,492	61·0	812	10·8	6·6
Age 17	3,218	920	28·6	188	20·4	5·8
Age 18	2,295	954	41·6	285	29·9	12·4
Merseyside Outer						
Age 16	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Age 17	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age 18	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Northern						
Cleveland						
Age 16	9,562	6,111	63·9	933	15·3	9·8
Age 17	2,667	705	26·4	251	35·6	9·4
Age 18	2,211	761	34·3	423	55·6	19·1
Durham						
Age 16	9,329	6,295	67·5	1,005	16·0	10·8
Age 17	1,981	526	26·6	150	28·5	7·6
Age 18	1,418	183	12·9	103	56·3	7·3
North Tyne						
Age 16	10,709	6,642	62·0	1,499	22·6	14·0
Age 17	3,131	999	31·9	405	40·5	12·9
Age 18	2,056	730	35·5	509	69·7	24·8
South Tyne						
Age 16	10,243	7,207	70·4	956	13·3	9·3
Age 17	2,089	623	29·8	232	37·2	11·1
Age 18	1,364	434	31·8	192	44·2	14·1
Wales						
Cardiff						
Age 16	14,463	7,539	52·1	1,668	22·1	11·5
Age 17	4,882	1,396	28·6	633	45·3	13·0
Age 18	3,228	867	26·9	416	48·0	12·9
Gwent						
Age 16	6,989	3,744	53·6	719	19·2	10·3
Age 17	1,944	464	23·9	174	37·5	9·0
Age 18	1,140	219	19·2	134	61·2	11·8
Swansea						
Age 16	10,563	5,178	49·0	1,073	20·7	10·2
Age 17	3,487	659	18·9	179	27·2	5·1
Age 18	2,300	313	13·6	210	67·1	9·1
Wrexham						
Age 16	11,724	5,997	51·2	1,488	24·8	12·7
Age 17	4,205	1,310	31·2	633	48·3	15·1
Age 18	2,444	536	21·9	410	76·5	16·8
Scotland						
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway						
Age 16	10,595	4,974	46·5	1,313	26·4	12·3
Age 17	2,644	1,126	42·6	543	48·2	20·5
Age 18	933	346	37·1	252	72·8	27·0
Central and Fife						
Age 16	13,265	6,289	47·4	1,397	22·2	10·5
Age 17	2,694	1,282	47·6	538	42·0	20·0
Age 18	1,074	492	45·8	280	56·9	26·1
Glasgow City						
Age 16	13,158	7,429	56·5	2,047	27·6	15·6
Age 17	2,192	1,150	52·5	535	46·5	24·4
Age 18	824	377	45·8	262	69·5	31·8
Grampian and Tayside						
Age 16	17,385	6,257	36·0	2,476	39·6	14·2
Age 17	3,378	924	27·4	472	51·0	14·0
Age 18	1,264	243	19·2	151	62·1	11·9
Highlands and Islands						
Age 16	5,367	2,349	43·8	897	38·2	16·7
Age 17	1,407	559	39·7	301	53·8	21·4
Age 18	547	218	39·9	139	63·8	25·4

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Lanarkshire						
Age 16	11,826	5,107	43·2	867	17·0	7·3
Age 17	2,340	956	40·9	296	31·0	12·6
Age 18	893	315	35·3	142	45·1	15·9
Lothian/Borders						
Age 16	15,442	6,836	44·3	2,683	39·2	17·4
Age 17	3,072	1,236	40·2	743	60·1	24·2
Age 18	1,136	439	38·6	330	75·2	29·0
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll						
Age 16	15,068	5,763	38·2	1,173	20·4	7·8
Age 17	4,032	1,643	40·7	694	42·2	17·2
Age 18	1,573	588	38·9	368	62·6	24·3

Notes:
n/a = Results are not available or are incomplete.
The figures are subject to error and should be treated as approximate.

Table 2
Results of the careers service exercise by MSC area office: December 1986

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
South East						
Chatham, Kent						
Age 16	21,133	10,814	51·2	4,330	40·0	20·5
Age 17	7,049	2,185	31·0	1,311	60·0	18·6
Age 18	4,036	1,399	34·7	1,259	90·0	31·2
Chelmsford						
Age 16	21,643	13,215	61·1	6,339	48·0	29·3
Age 17	6,684	1,845	27·6	1,225	66·4	18·3
Age 18	3,970	1,386	34·9	1,333	96·2	33·6
Fareham						
Age 16	21,512	11,024	51·2	4,816	43·7	22·4
Age 17	5,263	1,505	28·6	1,002	66·6	19·0
Age 18	3,792	1,070	28·6	888	83·0	23·7
High Wycombe						
Age 16	22,014	10,694	48·6	6,445	60·3	29·3
Age 17	8,041	1,846	23·0	1,293	70·0	16·1
Age 18	5,416	1,316	24·3	1,197	91·0	22·1
Horsham						
Age 16	27,010	12,531	46·4	7,425	59·3	27·5
Age 17	11,513	3,362	29·2	1,999	59·5	17·4
Age 18	7,109	1,700	23·9	1,628	95·8	22·9
Reading						
Age 16	17,087	9,076	53·1	5,217	57·5	30·5
Age 17	5,961	1,724	28·9	1,371	77·2	22·3
Age 18	3,799	1,090	28·7	1,037	95·1	27·3
South West						
Avon						
Age 16	12,312	7,404	60·1	2,554	34·5	20·7
Age 17	3,766	1,214	32·2	829	68·3	22·0
Age 18	2,330	739	31·7	665	90·0	28·5
Devon and Cornwall						
Age 16	18,726	10,668	57·0	2,977	27·9	15·9
Age 17	4,436	1,144	25·8	457	39·9	10·3
Age 18	2,761	710	25·7	543	76·5	19·7

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Gloucester and Wiltshire						
Age 16	14,644	7,893	54·6	3,728	47·3	25·8
Age 17	3,538	845	23·9	613	72·5	17·3
Age 18	2,281	693	30·4	640	92·3	28·1
Taunton, Somerset and Dorset						
Age 16	13,541	8,061	59·5	2,643	32·8	19·5
Age 17	3,144	933	29·7	616	66·0	19·6
Age 18	2,479	698	28·3	539	77·2	21·8
West Midlands Birmingham						
Age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Coventry/Warwick						
Age 16	11,641	6,870	59·0	1,838	26·8	15·8
Age 17	2,836	863	30·4	304	35·2	10·7
Age 18	2,229	641	28·8	321	50·1	14·4
Dudley/Sandwell						
Age 16	9,724	6,479	66·6	1,139	17·6	11·7
Age 17	1,640	438	26·7	88	20·1	5·4
Age 18	1,190	484	40·7	236	48·8	19·8
The Marches						
Age 16	14,901	8,091	54·2	2,284	28·3	15·3
Age 17	4,267	1,160	27·2	452	39·0	10·6
Age 18	2,514	666	26·5	479	71·9	19·1
Staffordshire						
Age 16	15,856	10,594	66·8	1,495	14·1	9·4
Age 17	3,600	720	20·0	221	30·7	6·1
Age 18	2,454	780	31·8	534	68·5	21·8
Wolverhampton						
Age 16	8,981	5,957	66·3	1,192	20·0	13·3
Age 17	2,150	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	1,316	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
East Midlands and Eastern						
Derby						
Age 16	13,529	7,493	55·4	1,928	25·7	14·3
Age 17	3,045	453	14·9	257	56·7	8·4
Age 18	1,995	528	26·5	402	76·1	20·2
Leicestershire						
Age 16	20,819	11,079	53·2	4,940	44·6	23·7
Age 17	6,862	1,872	27·3	1,039	56·6	15·4
Age 18	4,226	1,149	27·2	933	82·9	22·6
Lincoln						
Age 16	8,006	4,671	58·3	975	20·9	12·2
Age 17	1,852	180	10·3	100	55·6	5·7
Age 18	1,400	345	24·6	280	81·2	20·0
Nottingham						
Age 16	14,727	8,831	60·0	2,239	25·4	15·2
Age 17	3,347	1,793	53·6	933	52·0	27·9
Age 18	2,212	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Luton						
Age 16	15,037	8,025	53·4	4,163	51·9	27·7
Age 17	4,543	1,257	27·7	657	52·3	14·5
Age 18	2,729	923	33·8	806	87·3	29·5
Ipswich						
Age 16	18,287	11,026	60·3	4,027	36·5	22·0

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Age 17	4,609	1,299	28·0	730	56·6	15·8
Age 18	2,796	982	32·3	764	84·7	27·3
Yorkshire and Humberside						
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees						
Age 16	16,764	9,954	59·4	3,027	30·4	18·1
Age 17	4,974	1,255	25·2	495	39·4	10·0
Age 18	3,294	1,411	42·8	793	56·2	24·1
Humberside						
Age 16	13,645	8,922	65·4	2,121	23·8	15·6
Age 17	3,637	1,065	29·3	391	36·7	10·8
Age 18	2,500	625	25·0	425	68·0	17·0
Leeds/North Yorkshire						
Age 16	19,464	10,773	55·3	4,410	40·9	22·7
Age 17	6,023	1,789	29·7	974	54·4	16·2
Age 18	3,668	867	23·6	701	80·9	19·1
Sheffield/Rotherham						
Age 16	12,530	8,455	67·5	1,163	13·8	9·3
Age 17	3,421	900	26·3	144	16·0	4·2
Age 18	2,271	796	35·1	401	50·4	17·7
Wakefield/Barnsley/Doncaster						
Age 16	13,684	9,366	68·4	1,770	18·9	12·9
Age 17	2,582	758	29·4	253	33·4	9·8
Age 18	1,685	622	36·9	249	40·0	14·8
North West						
Cheshire						
Age 16	14,580	8,098	55·5	1,676	20·7	11·5
Age 17	4,338	1,014	23·4	374	36·9	56·3
Age 18	2,976	564	19·0	400	70·9	13·4
Cumbria						
Age 16	7,264	4,747	65·3	1,953	41·1	26·9
Age 17	1,706	383	22·5	264	68·9	15·5
Age 18	1,406	308	21·9	241	78·2	17·1
Greater Manchester Central						
Age 16	13,508	7,768	57·6	1,941	25·0	14·3
Age 17	3,428	592	17·3	201	34·0	5·9
Age 18	2,620	704	26·9	448	63·6	7·7
Greater Manchester East						
Age 16	11,387	6,999	61·5	1,732	24·7	15·2
Age 17	2,693	777	28·8	451	58·0	16·7
Age 18	1,924	262	13·6	194	74·0	10·1
Greater Manchester North						
Age 16	15,124	9,144	60·5	2,183	23·9	14·4
Age 17	3,758	786	21·0	304	38·7	8·1
Age 18	2,694	637	23·6	377	59·2	14·0
Lancashire						
Age 16	20,346	11,373	55·9	3,280	28·9	16·1
Age 17	2,922	650	22·2	300	46·2	10·3
Age 18	2,634	680	25·8	380	55·9	14·4
Merseyside Inner						
Age 16	12,158	7,109	58·5	907	12·8	7·5
Age 17	3,652	930	25·5	292	31·4	8·0
Age 18	2,321	660	28·4	468	70·9	20·2
Merseyside Outer						
Age 16	10,965	6,111	55·7	909	14·9	8·3
Age 17	2,713	714	26·3	218	30·5	8·0
Age 18	1,749	402	23·0	267	66·4	15·3

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Northern						
Cleveland						
Age 16	8,920	5,992	67·2	941	15·7	10·5
Age 17	2,788	574	20·7	234	40·8	8·5
Age 18	2,092	566	27·1	321	56·7	15·3
Durham						
Age 16	8,764	5,646	64·4	890	15·8	10·2
Age 17	1,936	522	27·0	135	25·9	7·0
Age 18	1,375	165	12·0	96	58·2	7·0
North Tyne						
Age 16	10,429	6,621	63·5	1,399	21·1	13·4
Age 17	3,212	998	31·1	374	37·5	11·6
Age 18	2,070	721	34·9	431	60·1	20·9
South Tyne						
Age 16	10,181	7,380	72·5	1,119	15·7	11·0
Age 17	2,683	794	29·6	282	35·6	10·5
Age 18	1,582	596	37·7	262	44·0	16·6
Wales						
Cardiff						
Age 16	13,765	7,035	51·1	1,413	20·0	10·3
Age 17	5,195	1,397	26·9	583	41·7	11·2
Age 18	3,232	713	22·1	526	73·7	16·3
Gwent						
Age 16	6,509	3,514	54·0	682	19·6	10·5
Age 17	2,026	615	30·4	163	26·5	8·1
Age 18	1,168	239	20·5	158	66·1	13·5
Swansea						
Age 16	10,154	5,021	49·4	864	17·2	85·1
Age 17	2,964	770	26·0	296	38·4	10·0
Age 18	2,049	393	19·2	262	66·7	12·8
Wrexham						
Age 16	11,241	6,064	53·9	1,552	25·6	13·8
Age 17	3,609	1,067	29·6	393	36·8	10·9
Age 18	2,140	490	22·9	322	65·7	15·0
Scotland						
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway						
Age 16	9,701	4,657	48·0	951	19·3	9·8
Age 17	2,662	1,170	44·0	437	37·4	16·4
Age 18	967	356	36·8	217	61·0	36·8
Central and Fife						
Age 16	12,567	6,119	41·5	1,213	19·8	9·7
Age 17	2,588	1,177	45·5	493	41·9	19·0
Age 18	1,039	431	41·5	258	60·0	24·8
Glasgow						
Age 16	12,375	7,002	57·3	1,841	26·0	14·9
Age 17	2,890	1,243	59·5	569	45·8	27·2
Age 18	805	461	57·3	305	66·2	37·9
Grampian and Tayside						
Age 16	17,476	5,902	39·5	2,072	30·0	11·9
Age 17	3,380	931	27·5	445	47·8	13·2
Age 18	1,261	256	20·3	188	73·3	15·0
Highlands and Islands						
Age 16	5,345	2,294	42·9	729	31·8	13·6
Age 17	1,416	547	38·6	269	49·2	19·0
Age 18	532	198	37·2	123	62·1	23·1
Lanarkshire						
Age 16	12,064	5,468	45·3	854	15·6	7·1
Age 17	2,274	1,048	46·1	327	31·2	14·4

Area	Total eligible to leave school	Number of school leavers	School leavers as a proportion of numbers eligible to leave school Per cent.	Number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS	School leavers in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of all school leavers Per cent.	Number in a full time job outside YTS as a proportion of those eligible to leave school Per cent.
Age 18	854	388	45·1	166	45·1	19·1
Lothian and Borders						
Age 16	14,539	6,584	45·3	2,527	38·4	17·4
Age 17	2,936	1,254	42·7	781	62·3	26·6
Age 18	1,104	453	41·0	367	81·0	33·2
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll						
Age 16	14,046	5,442	38·7	1,085	19·9	7·7
Age 17	3,819	1,519	39·8	602	11·1	15·8
Age 18	1,445	545	37·7	324	59·4	22·4

Notes:
n/a = Results are not available or are incomplete.
There are currently no estimates for the London offices due to delays in obtaining returns.
The figures are subject to error and should be treated as approximate.

Table 3
Results of the Careers Service Exercise by MSC Area Office: Change December 1985-88

	Change in the number eligible to leave school	Change in the number of school leavers	Change in the number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS
South East			
Chatham, Kent			
Age 16	−530	−18	−544
Age 17	433	134	80
Age 18	−56	130	117
Chelmsford			
Age 16	−78	297	−353
Age 17	−201	−805	−744
Age 18	−309	−454	−434
Fareham			
Age 16	−667	−1,028	−335
Age 17	−245	−354	−145
Age 18	89	−482	−498
High Wycombe			
Age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 17	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a
Horsham			
Age 16	−787	−14	148
Age 17	−107	−97	88
Age 18	−181	−175	−178
Reading			
Age 16	−319	80	407
Age 17	411	181	425
Age 18	229	228	233
London			
London North			
Age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 17	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a
London North East			
Age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 17	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a
London South East			
Age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 17	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a
London South and West			
Age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 17	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a
South West			
Avon			
Age 16	−277	25	−88
Age 17	−87	135	182
Age 18	−216	1	55
Devon and Cornwall			
Age 16	−947	211	−42
Age 17	64	366	13
Age 18	−334	162	130
Gloucester/Wiltshire			
Age 16	−662	−962	−44
Age 17	161	61	139
Age 18	−404	−329	−182
Taunton/Somerset/Dorset			
Age 15	−723	−552	−683
Age 17	−433	−300	−227
Age 18	−125	29	−22
West Midlands			
Birmingham			
Age 16	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 17	n/a	n/a	n/a
Age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a
Coventry/Warwick			
Age 16	−921	−4	4
Age 17	−9	29	21
Age 18	−26	25	−79
Dudley/Sandwell			
Age 16	−159	101	86
Age 17	−88	−120	−59

	Change in the number eligible to leave school	Change in the number of school leavers	Change in the number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS
Age 18	−54	31	60
The Marches			
Age 16	−482	−219	−77
Age 17	446	202	124
Age 18	−70	121	122
Staffordshire			
Age 16	−304	483	24
Age 17	−97	−62	−57
Age 18	−138	−436	−193
Wolverhampton			
Age 16	−59	1,097	231
Age 17	16	n/a	n/a
Age 18	−120	n/a	n/a
East Midlands and Eastern			
Derby			
Age 16	−611	−511	−18
Age 17	370	133	97
Age 18	−212	−2	−39
Leicestershire			
Age 16	−636	−995	−713
Age 17	142	−204	−341
Age 18	366	−67	−81
Lincoln			
Age 16	−192	−53	−249
Age 17	−148	−95	−30
Age 18	80	30	35
Nottingham			
Age 16	−1,350	−494	−494
Age 17	51	969	537
Age 18	−349	n/a	n/a
Luton			
Age 16	−112	472	579
Age 17	−240	144	−138
Age 18	−106	119	86
Ipswich			
Age 16	−215	−38	−115
Age 17	62	168	110
Age 18	−185	−482	−3
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees			
Age 16	138	−263	−152
Age 17	304	−98	−219
Age 18	401	288	176
Humberside			
Age 16	−361	−98	−154
Age 17	91	−44	−88
Age 18	0	0	0
Leeds/North Yorkshire			
Age 16	−726	29	−1,145
Age 17	−117	86	71
Age 18	−346	−171	11
Sheffield/Rotherham			
Age 16	−321	436	60
Age 17	31	100	−57
Age 18	−31	168	13
Wakefield/Barnsley/Doncaster			
Age 16	−25	230	28
Age 17	−100	−32	−39
Age 18	83	113	−34
North West			
Cheshire			
Age 16	−39	60	−94
Age 17	−24	96	37
Age 18	−101	1	38
Cumbria			
Age 16	−318	−299	−143
Age 17	−125	−45	20
Age 18	108	−25	14
Greater Manchester Central			
Age 16	436	244	79
Age 17	−243	−61	−80
Age 18	−286	−137	−72
Greater Manchester East			
Age 16	−92	424	−67
Age 17	−762	43	−4
Age 18	−104	−443	−413
Greater Manchester North			
Age 16	−276	−193	228
Age 17	275	−37	−14
Age 18	58	32	121
Lancashire			
Age 16	−688	−201	−434
Age 17	−61	172	140
Age 18	214	0	−20
Merseyside Inner			
Age 16	−116	−383	95
Age 17	434	10	104
Age 18	26	−294	83
Merseyside Outer			
Age 16	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age 17	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Age 18	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Northern			
Cleveland			
Age 16	−642	−119	8
Age 17	101	−131	−17
Age 18	1,881	−195	−102
Durham			
Age 16	−565	−649	−115
Age 17	−45	−4	−15
Age 18	−43	−18	−7
North Tyne			
Age 16	−280	−21	−100
Age 17	81	−1	−31
Age 18	14	−9	−76
South Tyne			
Age 16	−62	173	163
Age 17	594	−49	50
Age 18	728	132	129
Wales			
Cardiff			
Age 16	−698	−504	−255
Age 17	313	−50	−50
Age 18	4	−154	110
Gwent			
Age 16	−480	−230	−37

	Change in the number eligible to leave school	Change in the number of school leavers	Change in the number of school leavers in a full time job outside YTS
Age 17	82	151	−11
Age 18	28	20	24
Swansea			
Age 16	−409	−157	−209
Age 17	−523	111	117
Age 18	−251	80	52
Wrexham			
Age 16	−483	67	64
Age 17	−596	−243	−240
Age 18	−304	−46	−88
Scotland			
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway			
Age 16	−994	−317	−462
Age 17	18	44	−106
Age 18	34	10	−35
Central and Fife			
Age 16	−698	−170	−184
Age 17	−106	−105	−45
Age 18	−35	−61	−22
Glasgow City			
Age 16	−783	−337	−206
Age 17	−102	93	34
Age 18	−19	84	43
Grampian and Tyneside			
Age 16	91	645	−404
Age 17	2	7	−27
Age 18	−3	13	37
Highlands and Islands			
Age 16	−22	−55	−168
Age 17	9	−12	−32
Age 18	−15	−20	−16
Lanarkshire			
Age 16	188	361	−13
Age 17	−66	92	31
Age 18	−39	53	24
Lothian/Borders			
Age 16	−903	−252	−156
Age 17	−136	18	38
Age 18	−32	14	37
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll			
Age 16	−1,022	−321	−88
Age 17	−213	−124	−92
Age 18	−68	−43	−44

Notes:

n/a = results are not available or are incomplete.

The figures are subject to error and should be treated as approximate.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give from the most recent survey of youth training scheme providers, the number and proportion of trainees who will spend *(a)* fewer than 13 weeks and *(b)* more than 13 weeks on off-the-job training; and hw these figures with those available at the end of 1985.

Mr. Trippier: The survey of YTS providers conducted in January-February 1986 shows that 2 per cent. (5,300) of trainees received off-the-job training of less than 13 weeks; 98 per cent. (259,000) received off-the-job training for 13 weeks or longer.

Figures for 1985 are not available.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what are the current numbers of vacant places on the youth training schemes; and how this figure compares with that for the end of 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Manpower Services Commission records currently show some 327,900 YTS trainees in training at the end of February 1987 and 455,500 YTS contracted places. There are no exactly equivalent figures for earlier years. In December 1985 there were some 293,370 trainees in training and 384,700 places approved by area manpower boards; but not all approved places were subsequently contracted.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give for 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, and the latest estimates on figures for 1986-87, the total sum expended on the youth training scheme and the total sum expended on grants made to managing agents broken down into the administration fee, the training allowance the trainee allowance and capital grants.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is shown in the table:

£ million

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Forecast
Management Fee	33·8	33·1	35·9	52·0
Other Grants[1]	334·8	713·5	765·6	770·2
Capital Grants[2]	1·2	4·6	3·3	2·1
Other Expenditure[3]	10·7	12·2	13·4	15·0
Total YTS[4] Expenditure	380·5	763·4	818·2	839·3

[1] Separate information is not available for the contribution towards the cost of training and the trainee allowance. "Other Grants" also includes expenditure on excess travel and lodging allowances and vacated places.

[2] Capital grants funding ceased in August 1986.

[3] "Other Expenditure" includes research and development, accredited centres and miscellaneous minor items.

[4] Excludes MSC administration costs.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will list the total expenditure in 1986-87 prices of the Manpower Services Commission in each year since 1974, together with the percentage change in real terms over each previous year.

Mr. Trippier: The following table gives estimates of total expenditure by the Manpower Services Commission in each year since 1974 at 1986-87 prices.

Financial year	Total Manpower Services Commission expenditure at 1986-87 prices £ million	Percentage change over previous year
1974-75	392	
1975-76	768	95·9
1976-77	1,063	38·4
1977-78	1,175	10·5
1978-79	1,247	6·1
1979-80	1,209	−3·0
1980-81	1,222	1·1
1981-82	1,421	16·3
1982-83	1,573	10·7
1983-84	2,023	28·6
1984-85	2,250	11·2
1985-86	2,444	8·6
1986-87 (forecast)	3,059	25·2

Notes:

(1) Includes Manpower Services Commission expenditure on behalf of the Department of Employment.

(2) Cash figures adjusted to 1986-87 price levels have been calculated by taking account of each year's general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices. It has been assumed that the average level of the GDP deflator in 1986-87 will be equal to the mid-1986-87 value.

Construction Industry (Sikh Workers)

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General if representatives of the Sikh community were consulted on the proposed new guidance note on managing health and safety in construction.

Mr. Trippier: No. However, the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) has published a consultative document on proposed regulations making the wearing of head protection compulsory in construction work. This has attracted a number of representations from the Sikh community whose views will be considered carefully by the HSC and Ministers.

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General what has been the incidence of head injuries to construction workers wearing turbans in each of the past five years.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety Executive has no records of any fatal injuries of this kind, but information on the wearing of turbans is not systematically included in its accident records.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what was the number and percentage rate of unemployment among 16 and 17-year-olds *(a)* nationally *(b)* by ethnic origin, *(c)* by region and *(d)* by sex at the latest available date and for September, January and June in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c. *151-52*]: Following is the available information. The tables show numbers of unemployed aged under 18 years in the regions, together with the appropriate numbers and rates of unemployment in the United Kingdom analysed by sex. Figures are given for January, July and October of each year since 1982 (not available for June or September). The rates of unemployment for 1982 relate to unemployed registrants expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed. Rates for later years are expressed as a percentage of the working population. The working population excludes young people receiving YTS training without a contract of employment. Rates of unemployment by age are not calculated below national level.

Statistics of unemployment by ethnic origin are collected in the "Labour Force Survey", but the figures requested are not available except at disproportionate cost. The last available information based on the monthly unemployment count relates to unemployed registrants in Great Britain as at February 1982, and this is available in the Library.

United Kingdom
Unemployed claimants aged under 18 years

	Male		*Female*	
	Number	*Percentage of working population*	*Number*	*Percentage of working population*
January 1987	92,436	21·4	69,805	16·5
October 1986	106,409	24·6	80,111	18·9
July 1986	97,414	22·5	73,420	17·3
January 1986	107,609	24·9	79,147	18·7
October 1985	121,972	28·2	89,223	21·1
July 1985	102,574	23·7	75,036	17·7
January 1985	113,852	26·3	83,826	19·8
October 1984	134,033	30·5	99,930	24·0
July 1984	94,726	21·5	69,420	16·7
January 1984	115,861	26·3	88,432	21·2
October 1983	142,676	31·5	108,494	26·4
July 1983	118,519	26·1	79,612	19·4
January 1983	123,769	27·3	97,976	23·8

	Number	*Percentage of employees and unemployed*	*Number*	*Percentage of employees and unemployed*
October 1982	141,863	29·1	111,031	24·9
Unemployed registrants aged under 18 years				
October 1982	152,275	30·6	121,738	26·7
July 1982	203,916	36·4	166,587	32·7
January 1982	128,487	25·1	101,583	21·9

Unemployed registrants aged under 18 years

	January '82	*July '82*	*October '82*
South East	51,285	81,890	69,588
Greater London	23,451	31,092	33,180
East Anglia	5,994	10,095	6,780
South West	12,457	23,879	14,258
West Midlands	24,263	39,143	29,643
East Midlands	12,454	26,990	15,965
Yorkshire and Humberside	22,755	40,088	28,915
North West	29,735	48,540	34,719
Northern	16,319	28,118	18,904
Wales	12,145	17,257	13,596
Scotland	33,138	42,300	30,608
Northern Ireland	9,525	12,203	11,037

Unemployed claimants aged under 18 years

	October 1982	*January 1983*	*July 1983*	*October 1983*
South East	58,601	49,113	41,126	55,554
Greater London	26,591	22,276	19,225	26,035
East Anglia	6,655	5,822	4,833	6,658
South West	13,787	12,230	9,790	14,059
West Midlands	28,277	23,341	20,247	27,122
East Midlands	14,306	12,590	10,846	13,895
Yorks and Humberside	27,675	22,660	19,358	26,169
North West	31,783	27,879	26,203	33,951
Northern	18,549	15,649	13,999	19,235
Wales	13,815	11,859	10,198	14,376
Scotland	30,446	34,334	26,262	32,309
Northern Ireland	9,000	6,268	5,407	7,841

Unemployed claimants aged under 18 years

	January 1984	*July 1984*	*October 1984*	*January 1985*
South East	44,292	35,406	49,607	41,253
Greater London	20,716	16,782	22,807	18,968
East Anglia	5,318	4,037	5,646	4,584
South West	11,488	8,609	13,419	11,228

	January 1984	July 1984	October 1984	January 1985
West Midlands	20,491	17,129	24,995	19,975
East Midlands	11,570	9,929	14,152	12,044
Yorks and Humberside	19,558	17,042	25,876	20,259
North West	26,791	22,816	31,783	26,170
Northern	14,259	12,012	17,976	13,939
Wales	10,725	8,441	13,665	10,788
Scotland	33,693	23,544	30,228	31,992
Northern Ireland	6,102	5,180	6,614	5,045

Unemployed claimants aged under 18 years

	July 1985	October 1985	January 1986	July 1986
South East	34,450	41,491	36,682	31,046
Greater London	16,001	19,279	16,647	14,151
East Anglia	4,376	5,254	5,100	4,244
South West	9,061	11,720	10,647	8,885
West Midlands	18,619	22,744	19,144	17,924
East Midlands	11,818	12,771	11,250	11,603
Yorks and Humberside	20,141	24,305	19,997	21,681
North West	26,195	29,698	24,872	24,460
Northern	15,785	16,530	13,242	13,401
Wales	8,932	12,879	10,456	8,197
Scotland	23,961	27,908	30,425	24,903
Northern Ireland	4,269	5,895	4,941	4,490

Unemployed claimants aged under 18 years

	October 1986	January 1987
South East	34,329	29,557
Greater London	15,697	13,374
East Anglia	4,498	4,200
South West	9,954	8,919
West Midlands	20,406	16,684
East Midlands	11,511	10,143
Yorks and Humberside	22,573	18,312
North West	25,900	21,627
Northern	13,374	10,642
Wales	10,667	8,593
Scotland	27,368	28,868
Northern Ireland	5,940	4,696

Notes:

(1) Unemployment figures from January 1982 to October 1982 relate to unemployed registrants at jobcentres; from October 1982 onwards they relate to claimants at benefit offices. Figures for October 1982 are given on both bases.

(2) Figures are not directly comparable due to changes in the method of the compilation of the count.

(3) The working population estimates used to calculate unemployment rates by age exclude many YTS participants who have no contract of employment. Percentage rates for those aged under 18 which include all those on YTS in the United Kingdom working population are:

	Per cent.
1983	
January	25·0
July	21·2
October	28·3
1984	
January	19·8
July	15·9
October	22·6
1985	
January	19·1
July	17·2
October	20·4
1986	
January	18·1
July	16·5
October	18·0
1987	
January	15·7

(4) Greater London is included in the south-east region.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 9th April 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

PICKUP Initiative

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money it is estimated that the PICKUP initiative has generated for each polytechnic, technical college and college of further education.

Mr. Walden: An enquiry by the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education during the course of a recent exercise designed to finance an increase in PICKUP work revealed that 38 of our polytechnics and major colleges are now turning over more than £100,000 a year from PICKUP training and the five leaders have turnovers in excess of £500,000. The total income for the 38 establishments from PICKUP activity was over £10 million.

Inner London (Further Education)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of pupils aged 16 years and over have remained in full-time education in inner London; and how this compares with the national average.

Mr. Dunn: The percentages of 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education at maintained schools and further education establishments in the academic year 1985-86, in inner London and in England were as follows:

Academic year 1985-86

	I.L.E.A.	*England*
16-year-olds in full-time education (Percentage of age group)[1]	46	46
17-year-olds in full-time education (Percentage of age group)[1]	27	30

[1] The number of 16 and 17-year-olds expressed as a percentage of the total number of 15-year-olds in maintained secondary schools one and two years earlier respectively.

School Activities (Charges)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on charges for music lessons, field trips, cookery lessons and other similar school activities.

Mrs. Rumbold: The law on charges for school activities is contained in the 1944 Education Act. Charges for educational "extras" were included in the recent review of local authority fees and charges. The Government has not yet complete consideration of the results of the review, but hopes to have done so fairly soon.

Geological Surveys (Report)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has yet received a copy of Sir Clifford Butler's report on geological surveying in the United Kingdom; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has not yet received the report. It was commissioned jointly by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Natural Environment Research Council. It will be for the chairmen of those bodies, if they wish, to submit the report to my right hon. Friend with whatever advice they may wish to offer.

Dr. and Mrs. W. G. McLean

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why he has not answered the letter written to him by constituents of the hon. Member for Birkenhead, Dr. and Mrs. W. G. McLean, 2 Poplar road, Oxton, Birkenhead on 14 December 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: A reply has been issued today.

Universities (Research)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from university authorities about their ability to raise private funds and receive benefactions for research in view of the money available for maintenance of laboratory facilities.

Mr. Walden: None.

Science Budget

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has allocated the additional £15 million for the science budget in 1987-88 which he announced on 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following receipt of advice from the Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, I am today informing the bodies concerned of the following additions to their allocations for 1987-88.

	£ million
Agricultural and Food Research Council	1·5
Economic and Social Research Council	0·8
Medical Research Council	3·8
Natural Environment Research Council	0·8
Science and Engineering Research Council	7·5
British Museum (Natural History)	0·3
The Royal Society	0·3

In addition I am allocating a further £1·25 million in 1987-88, from within my programme, to the Natural Environment Research Council to reinforce the important and valuable work of the British Antarctic Survey. Supplementary Estimates for all the above expenditure will be presented in due course.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the first order under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act will be laid before Parliament; and when he will issue guidance on the use of the £500 incentive allowance.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The first order to be made under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 was laid before Parliament today. It provides for a pay increase for school teachers from 1 January 1987 and for conditions of employment to have effect as terms of teachers' contracts.

I have today written to the relevant local education authority associations, teacher unions and bodies representing the interests of governors of voluntary schools sending them a copy of the order, a draft circular about the order, and a paper setting out the Government's current thinking about the use of incentive allowances and in particular the £500 allowance.

Copies of this letter and the attachments are available in the Vote Office.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Guinness plc

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the investigation into Guinness plc to be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The inspectors are proceeding with their investigation with commendable speed. I cannot say when it will be concluded.

Torvinstyle Properties Ltd.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet completed his consideration of the report concerning Torvinstyle Properties Ltd., trading as Five Star Developments; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The information obtained concerning Tovinstyle Properties Ltd. is still being considered and I cannot say what action it is proposed to take.

OECD Countries (Exports)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has for each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries as to the value of total exports per capita in United States dollars, including oil, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

OECD Exports per Capita 1986

Country	*United States* $
Canada	3,415
USA	908
Japan	1,746
Australia	1,431
New Zealand	[1]1,699
Austria	2,969
Belgium/Luxembourg	6,715
Denmark	4,149
Finland	3,325
France	2,162
F R Germany	3,973
Greece	[1]458
Iceland	[1]3,346
Ireland	[1]1,915
Italy	1,706
Netherlands	5,563
Norway	4,397
Portugal	[1]591
Spain	703
Sweden	[1]3,634
Switzerland	5,704
Turkey	159
United Kingdom	1,867

Notes:
[1] 1985 Exports 1985. Population figures used throughout.
Source: OECD.

Industrial Assistance

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies in Bury have obtained regional selective assistance under section 7 of the Industry Act since November 1984; and how much financial assistance in total was offered to them.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the period from 1 November 1984 to 31 March 1987, 13 companies in Bury were offered regional assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982. The total value of these offers was £1,478,000.

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies in Bury have obtained assistance under the business improvement scheme; and how much financial assistance in total was offered to them.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since the business improvement services scheme started in November 1984, offers of assistance have been made to 116 companies in the Bury travel-to-work-Area, to a total value of £956,921.

Privatisation (Multiple Share Applications)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement as to what proportion of the shares of BT were examined for possible illegality as referred to in the answer of 13 February 1985, *Official Report*, column *176*, to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams).

Mr. Channon: All the shareholdings under the United Kingdom offer for sale were so examined. The overseas share issue arrangements were explained in the earlier answer.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement as to the arrangements that were made for the examination of BT share applications for possible illegalities.

Mr. Channon: Arrangements were made to deter and detect multiple applications. They led to some 6,600 applications being rejected.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of multiple share applications discovered in the following privatisations: Amersham International, British Gas, Cable and Wireless and Associated British Ports, and the number of prosecutions arising from multiple share applications, together with the penalties involved; and if he will supply the same information in respect of the Trustee Savings Bank flotation.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Lady as soon as possible.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will establish inquiries into the sale of shares in *(a)* British Aerospace (second tranche), *(b)* British Airways, *(c)* British Gas, *(d)* Britoil (second tranche), *(e)* Cable and Wireless (third tranche) and *(f)* the Trustee Savings Bank, with a view to establishing the precise extent of multiple share applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Electronic Communications Infrastructure

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how, in the light of recommendation 15 of the Peacock report, the Government expect the electronic communications infrastructure in the United Kingdom to develop; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend has set up a new steering group to advise on such prospective infrastructure developments. This steering group, which is chaired by Mr. Alstair Macdonald, a deputy secretary in my Department, has as its members Mr. John Alvey, formerly a director of BT plc, Professor Bryan Carsberg, Director General of Telecommunications, Mr. Ivor Cohen, managing director of Mullard Ltd, Mr. John Fairclough, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser and Professor Stanley Metcalfe of Manchester university.

We have also awarded a major study contract to a firm of consultants to identify ways in which the United Kingdom electronics communications infrastructure may be expected to develop over the next two decades, and the likely effects on suppliers, users and society as a whole. This study is expected to take some eight months to complete.

My Department has also prepared a discussion document as a basis for wider consultation on these issues. This document is being sent to the major players in the communications industry for comment. This will help to ensure that both the study and the work of the steering group start on a sound footing. Copies of the discussion document have been placed in the Library of the House and will be made available more generally by my Department on request.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary informed the House last November that we would be considering recommendation 15 of the Peacock report in more detail. Both the consultants study and the establishment of the steering group are essential steps in this process.

Following the study, and in the light of its outcome, the responses to the discussion document and concurrent reviews by the steering group, the Government expect to make public the conclusions they have reached.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the rate of growth in London's gross domestic product during 1985; and what was the last year for which figures are available when a greater rate of growth was recorded.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Regional gross domestic product data are available only in current price terms; constant price data are not available. Therefore, the figures quoted make no allowance for inflation.

Greater London's GDP in 1985 was nearly 12 per cent. higher than in 1984. The last year when a greater rate of growth was recorded was in 1980. For further information see the article "Regional accounts, 1985" *Economic Trends* November 1986, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Post Office

Sir Philip Holland asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the profit targets for 1987-88 for the letters, parcels and counters business of the Post Office.

Mr. Pattie: The overall profit target for the postal business of the Post Office for 1987-88 is 3·25 per cent. return on turnover, before net interest and tax, on the current cost accounting basis. Profit targets for the three subordinate businesses in 1987-88, calculated on the same basis as the overall target, are 2·8 per cent. for letters, 6·7 per cent. for parcels and 1·2 per cent. for counters.

National Metrological Co-ordinating Unit (Report)

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to publish the annual report of the National Metrological Co-ordinating Unit, as required by section 60(1) of the Weights and Measures Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The report covering the period 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986 has been published today. I have arranged for copies of the report, which includes the audited statement of accounts, to be placed in the Library.

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power Stations

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy with regard to the provision of urban sites suitable for combined heat and power stations.

Mr. David Hunt: Provision of sites for CHP stations is a commercial matter for the promoters of CHP schemes.

Energy Labelling

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any proposals to introduce energy labelling for electrical appliances.

Mr. David Hunt: Many manufacturers and retailers already provide energy consumption data for electrical appliances, either in their sales brochures or in the form of "energy labels" on the appliance itself.

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy if it is his intention to publish in full the long-term safety reviews of magnox reactors as soon as they are completed.

Mr. Goodlad: All long-term safety reviews of magnox reactors will be assessed by the NII, whose conclusions will be published in due course.

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, by station, the current status of the long-term safety reviews of magnox reactors currently being carried

out by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the nuclear installations inspectorate, indicating the date when such reviews commenced, and the estimated dates for completion.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the Hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 3 December 1986, at column 675-76 and on 16 December 1986, at column 477.

Power Stations (Repairs)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many major repairs to nuclear power stations have been undertaken since 1983; and at what cost.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall ask the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many major repairs to coal-fired power stations have been undertaken since 1983; and at what cost.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall ask the chairman of the CEGB and BNFL to write to the hon. Member.

Concessionary Coal

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the average consumption of house coal and smokeless fuel per household in the United Kingdom; and if he will publish details of the supply of concessionary fuel to mineworkers in each National Coal Board area.

Mr. David Hunt [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *649*]: Disposals of house coal in the United Kingdom in 1986 were some 8·5 million tonnes, and of smokeless fuels were some 3·2 million tonnes. Of some 21 million households in the United Kingdom, an estimated 4 million use solid fuel in some form, of which about 2·8 million use solid fuel as the main form of heating.

TRANSPORT

Underground (Escalators)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for such a report from the chairman of London Regional Transport as to how many escalators at Underground stations are not in working order, how long in each case they have been out of order, and when they are expected to be returned to working order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans to call for a report. Responsibility for the efficient day-to-day operation of the Underground lies with London Underground Ltd. which has a substantial repair and maintenance programme underway.

Road Schemes (Private Involvement)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many road schemes sponsored or supported by his Department have private financial involvement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 1 April a Bill to authorise the construction of a new bridge between Dartford and Thurrock was introduced. Subject to parliamentary approval, the bridge will be financed privately, constructed and operated by Dartford River Crossing Ltd. and will cost about £86 million at July 1986 prices.

There are currently 10 road schemes, with a total cost about £2·5 million, for which the Department are negotiating payment of the cost of the works with private developers.

The Department has no comparable information for local highway authority schemes supported through transport supplementary grant. This grant is paid towards accepted expenditure by the authorities themselves, net of any private sector contributions.

Eastern Distribution Road, Stafford

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the proposed eastern distribution road in Stafford; and why the construction of the road has not yet been commenced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have received several representations supporting an early start to this local authority scheme. It is for Staffordshire county council, as highway authority, to decide what priority it should be given.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were in possession of an orange badge at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 800,000 in March 1986 according to information supplied by local authorities.

A406 (Popes Lane-Western Avenue)

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce his decision on the A406 Popes Lane-Western Avenue scheme, for which he received the inspector's report in summer, 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on Tuesday 7 April 1987, at column. 125.

A15-B1206 Link

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will made a decision on Humberside county council's application to build a new road junction on the A15 road at Bonby Lodge to link with the B1206.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Humberside county council's preliminary report about a new junction at Bonby Lodge was received in February. We have asked for further information in order to make a judgment. We will consider the matter when this information is provided.

Traffic Commissioners (Bus Deregulation)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the work and the effectiveness of the traffic commissioners following bus deregulation in 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: The transitional arrangements for registration of bus services under the Transport Act 1985 placed a heavy burden of work on the traffic commissioners and their staff. They are to be congratulated on the way in which they have discharged these duties.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department's approach to financial management is set out in the annual departmental plan. A copy of the 1986-87 plan is in the Library of the House. The 1987-88 plan will be available shortly.

Particularly good progress has been made in executive units, which employ some 90 per cent. of the Department's staff. More of them are now individually accountable units with challenging targets for controlling unit costs and improving quality of service. As examples of progress, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre last year achieved its target of turning round 90 per cent. of transactions within 8 days, while reducing the real unit cost of each transaction by 2 per cent.; unit costs in the vehicle inspectorate increased by only half the rate of inflation. Motorway maintenance work has been speeded up by increased use of lane rental contracts, reducing costly delays to motorists and the road haulage industry.

Road Signs

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to introduce a coach route sign and a coach bus sign in his Department's "Signs Manual".

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Bus and coach signing is being reviewed.

A range of signs will be authorised on an experimental basis and their effectiveness compared before prescribing such signs for general use. Local authorities can meanwhile apply to the Department for special authorisation of particular signs.

Ashbourne Bypass

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary for State for Transport what progress is being made with plans for the Ashbourne bypass; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Preliminary investigations by consulting engineers are now well in hand. Traffic surveys are to be carried out this month and in May. These will establish the traffic patterns in and around Ashbourne, and help us plan and test possible routes for a new trunk road. We hope to be able to consult the public on alternatives next year.

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received about the plans for the Ashbourne bypass in the last six months; and if he will indicate from whom they have come.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last six months written representations have not been received.

Trains (Overcrowding)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport what statistics he has available on passenger train overcrowding.

Mr. David Mitchell: I receive copies of British Rail's annual survey of the loadings of London commuter trains.

Roads (London)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all major road schemes in the Greater London area that have departmental approval to proceed; and what is the cost of each scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am currently reviewing the national trunk road construction programme and hope to announce conclusions shortly. The current programme of major London schemes is set out in "National Roads England 1985". A copy is in the Library. I have also announced a proposal to safeguard the line of a new western environmental improvement route for London.

Traffic Management Guidance

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to issue traffic management guidance to the London borough councils under schedule 5 to the Local Government Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following consultation with the London local authority associations and the police on the draft sent to them last November, and taking account of other comments we have received from some of the wide range of interested organisations who also received copies, we have today issued traffic management guidance to the London borough councils.

Copies of the circular to London boroughs to which it is annexed are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Well-designed traffic management can contribute positively to economic, social and environmental conditions in London and play an important role in helping communities cope with traffic problems. In particular, we wish to encourage vehicles to make the fullest possible use of London's strategic network of roads in preference to seeking alternative routes through suitable streets and residential areas. Well-managed traffic benefits private and public transport users alike and also helps create better and safer conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

The traffic guidance we have now issued will be particularly useful to the London borough councils,

(a) as a context for preparing annual transport policies and programmes, and

(b) in formulating proposals affecting the designated road network for which my consent is needed.

We look forward to continuing to develop with the borough councils new initiatives to tackle London's road and traffic problems.

Helicopter Search and Rescue Service

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he anticipates a search and rescue service helicopter will be located in north-west Scotland.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Tenders for provision of a search and rescue helicopter for north-West Scotland have been received and are being evaluated. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Coaches (Speed Limiters)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has begun the consultation process on

draft regulations to require speed limiters to be fitted to all coaches which are capable of exceeding the motorway speed limit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A technical standard for speed limiters has now been agreed. Draft regulations based on the standard are being circulated to interested parties today, which set a timetable for all coaches to be fitted with speed limiters calibrated to a maximum speed of 70 mph. The draft regulations would require new coaches to be fitted with a speed limiter from 1 April 1988, those first used on or after 1 April 1984 from 1 April 1989, and older coaches from 1 April 1990. Coaches first used before 1 April 1987 would not be affected by the proposals. Any limiter fitted before the regulations come into effect would not need to comply with all the details of the British Standard, but would have to meet the tamper-proofing and calibration requirements.

Seat Belts

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will be introducing regulations before the end of this month to make it mandatory to fit seat belts to the front seats of all new large coaches and minibuses.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect to make regulations requiring the fitting of seat belts to all exposed seats on new coaches and to the front seats of new minibuses within the next four to six weeks.

Carriers' Liability (Limits)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport which states have not ratified the Montreal protocols to the Warsaw convention to raise carriers' liability limits to 100 SDRs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The following states have ratified Montreal protocol No. 3 to the Warsaw convention, which will raise carriers' liability to 100,000 SRDs: the United Kingdom, Brazil, Portugal, The Netherlands, Colombia and Italy. It is open for other states to ratify if they wish.

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport which states have entered into special contracts with their passengers to provide for higher limits of liability under the Warsaw convention.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Full details of other states' arrangements for passenger compensation are not available. I understand that most developed countries require their airlines, or at least their national carrier, to take out "special contracts" with their passengers at a level of about 100,000 SDRs. The latest information I have is:

Country	
Switzerland	200,000 Swiss francs
Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Japan	100,000 SDRs
Belgium	90,000 SDRs
France, Portugal	80,000 SDRs
Israel	80 to 100,000 US dollars
West Germany	58,000 US dollars
Canada	300,000 Canadian dollars

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. William Casey

Q6. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list those occasions on which she met Mr. William Casey, while he was head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on Monday 6 April at column *21*.

Open Tech

Mr. Hume asked the Prime Minister if she will indicate what financial and planning resources have been put into Open Tech provision *(a)* in Northern Ireland and *(b)* in Great Britain over the last five years.

The Prime Minister: The Open Tech programme, which ran from October 1982 to March 1987, was funded by the Manpower Services Commission, which does not operate in Northern Ireland. The Commission provided nearly £51 million over that period, to help fund the production of 30,000 hours of open learning materials and develop a range of supporting services. Up to 39 commission staff were involved at any one time. No information is available about additional resources provided by contracting bodies. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland funded a separate programme between March 1985 and March 1987, providing some £200,000 for supporting services for existing open learning materials, most of which have been produced by Open Tech.

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library the advice given to trades unions about options for reallocating responsibilities between the Department of Employment and the Department of Health and Social Security.

The Prime Minister: No.

Official Visits

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Prime Minister on how many occasions since 1983 the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been accompanied on his official visits to Brussels by a Welsh Office Minister.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has not been accompanied on official visits to Brussels by a Welsh Office Minister since 1983.

Scottish and Border Television Companies

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Hackey, South and Shoreditch on 6 April, what is the estimated cost of her forthcoming meeting with news and current affairs executives from a number of broadcasting and newspaper interests in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: The estimated cost of this function is about £1,000. This will be in line with the cost of other similar functions held at 10 Downing Street.

British Telecom

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what is the current level of fees payable to British Telecom for the interception of telephone communications; on what basis the fee is calculated; with which other companies Her Majesty's Government have contracts in respect of such services; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on the details of the operation of the interception arrangements.

Cruise Missiles

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister whether, in the light of the decision of the Belgian Government to delay the deployment of 32 cruise missiles, scheduled for delivery by the end of 1987 if negotiations on intermediate nuclear forces are still in progress by the end of the year, she has anything to add to her reply on 19 March, *Official Report*, column *554*, regarding the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy towards the continued deployment of long range intermediate nuclear forces in the absence of an agreement with the Soviet Union; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Following Mr. Gorbachev's statement on 28 February the Belgian Government reaffirmed the position on missile deployments which it has held since 1985. After the meeting of NATO's Special Consultative Group (on INF) on 27 March, which includes all the European basing countries, the chairman issued a statement which included the following:

"The SCG also reaffirmed the Alliance's readiness to modify, halt, reverse or dispense altogether with its deployment of LRINF missiles as part of a balanced, equitable and effectively verifiable arms control agreement. On the other hand, the Group confirmed NATO's determination to continue the deployment of LRINF missiles as scheduled, in the absence of an INF arms control treaty with the Soviet Union obviating the need for such deployments".

Japanese Prime Minister (Letter)

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library a copy of the letter she received from Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan regarding trade relations with that country.

The Prime Minister: No. It is not normal diplomatic practice to publish exchanges of this kind.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what is her practice on allowing people other than Ministers, civil servants or serving officers to attend formal meetings of Cabinet Committees.

The Prime Minister: As a general rule no one who is not either a Minister or a servant of the Crown may be invited to attend a meeting of a Cabinet Committee. Exceptions to this rule are allowed only in most unusual circumstances.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 April.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 April.

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later this afternoon, including one with King Hussein of Jordan.

DEFENCE

Diego Garcia

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *412*, what information he has about United States satellite monitoring facilities on Diego Garcia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The ground-based electro-optical deep space surveillance system on Diego Garcia is a space tracking station for the passive monitoring by light sensitive telescopes of objects in space, particularly satellites in geosynchronous orbit.

Civilian Doctors (London Weighting)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will pay a London weighting allowance to civilian medical practitioners employed by the Ministry of Defence in the London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The rate of pay of civilian medical practitioners employed by the Ministry of Defence is fixed by reference to notional figures used by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body when fixing the remuneration of NHS general medical practitioners. General medical practitioners in the NHS do not get extra remuneration for working in London and it would be wrong, having based the pay on that of an analogue which does not receive London weighting, to add London weighting to the Civil Service rate for civilian medical practitioners.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Stanley: The Ministry of Defence's response to the financial management initiative, which incorporated developments already in train, primarily involved the introduction of a top management information system and managerial budgets with associated delegated powers (executive responsibility budgets and staff responsibility budgets). The Public Accounts Committee took evidence on this programme from the permanent under secretary on 17 December 1986. Changes stemming from MINIS include the reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence which came into effect on 2 January 1985 (Cmnd. 9315). The basic purpose of executive responsibility budgets, which now cover a very wide range of support activities in the United Kingdom, is to enable managers to carry out their tasks more efficiently and economically. The current programme involves some 340 units, with operating costs

of about £3·5 billion a year. Although the final stages of the implementation process have yet to be completed there are already indications that this new budgetary system is helping to promote greater cost consciousness and providing a basis for more effective planning and decision making. Examples of benefits in terms of better value for money include a significant improvement in engine repair times at a naval helicopter repair depot; a more economical system for the testing of blood specimens at an Army hospital; and increased productivity at RAF supply depots.

The Department's financial training programme has been substantially expanded in the light of the financial management initiative. Training is being provided for service personnel as well as civilian staff.

Service Personnel (Scotland)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of service personnel located in Scotland by virtue of port basing but who are resident elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: 5,419 Royal Navy personnel are currently serving on ships base ported in Scotland. It would not be possible without disproportionate effort to determine how many are resident elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of the total annual wage bill paid to service personnel based in Scotland for each of the past four years.

Mr. Freeman: Annual wage bills are not maintained by geographical area. The following is an estimate for the financial years 1983-84 to 1986-87 inclusive:

	£ million
1983-84	151·4
1984-85	169·0
1985-86	181·9
1986-87	192·3

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the total amount of wages paid to Ministry of Defence service personnel included in the Scottish regional total but who are resident elsewhere in the United Kingdom for each of the past four years.

Mr. Freeman: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants (Scotland)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the total annual wages bill paid to Scottish based Ministry of Defence civil servants for each of the past four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is not readily available and to provide it would involve disproportionate cost and time.

Royal Navy Armaments Depot, Coulport

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is able to estimate the number of job losses at Royal Navy Armaments Depot, Coulport due to Trident missiles being serviced on board the vessels by members of their crews.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of jobs likely to be lost at Royal Navy Armaments Depot, Coulport and at the Faslane base due to the longer duration of patrols to be undertaken by Trident submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The planned pattern of Trident submarine patrols will have no bearing on the employment levels at Faslane and Coulport.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the pattern of employment, in terms of specific skills, of the proposed refits of the United Kingdom Trident squadron; and what are the implications for the current labour force mix engaged in the Polaris refits.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Trident refits will be undertaken at Rosyth.

Employment levels in the royal dockyards are matters for the commercial managers.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose the United States navy vessel Vega calls at Royal Navy Armaments Depot, Coulport.

Mr. Stanley: The Vega calls at RNAD, Coulport to deliver material for use in connection with the support of the United Kingdom Polaris programme.

US Forces (Scotland)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the breakdown of the annual payments received from the Government of the United States of America for the upkeep of their facilities located in Scotland for each of the past four years.

Mr. Freeman: Payments received from the Government of the United States of America for the upkeep of facilities made available to US forces in Scotland, that is maintenance and minor works services, for each of the last four years were:

	£
1983-84	1,140,126
1984-85	1,174,000
1985-86	1,221,059
1986-87	785,638

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the current number of Ministry of Defence service and civil personnel in Ministry of Defence facilities located in Scotland.

Mr Archie Hamilton: The number of United Kingdom service personnel deployed in Scotland on 1 January 1987 was 20,846 and the number of full-time equivalent civilian staff was 18,130.

Service numbers include RN/RM personnel serving on ships whose home port is in Scotland and which were in home waters on 1 January.

Civilian numbers exclude casual staff.

Clyde Submarine Base

Dr Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost of the expansion of (a) the Trident facilities and (b) the conventional facilities at the Clyde submarine base; and what percentage of the total Trident budget is represented by (a) above.

Mr Freeman: The total cost of works developments at the Clyde submarine base is estimated at some £550 million; of this, some £350 million can be attributed directly to the Trident programme and this figure amounts to 4 per cent. of the total costs of that programme. However, to the figure of £350 million must be added Trident works costs in other locations, contingency and certain other costs in order to arrive at a total which represents the figure of 7 per cent included in the breakdown of Trident costs made available to the House by my right hon. Friend on 27 January this year.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence why there has been an increase since May 1984 from 1,500 peak-time jobs to 2,500 jobs at the Clyde submarine base.

Mr Archie Hamilton: Since May 1984 the design of the facilities at the Clyde submarine base has been refined and the work required to build them more accuately defined. The construction programme for Trident in Scotland as a whole will, at its peak, create over 2,500 jobs; most of these will be at the Clyde submarine base.

Air Defence

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the efficiency and readines of the Royal Air Force air defence.

Mr. Stanley: The RAF's high standards of readiness and effectiveness are demonstrated in regular air defence exercises. We are in the midst of a very substantial programme to improve our air defences, which I outlined in my reply to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) on 24 February, at column 217. Once completed, our air defence system will be greatly enhanced.

Tornado F3

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Tornado F3 fighter.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The excellent range and loiter capability of the Tornado air defence variant make it ideally suited for the role of air defence of the United Kingdom. Although the Tornado ADV's Foxhunter radar does not yet meet all the requirements of the Royal Air Force, action is in hand to rectify this. Radars to an interim standard have already been delivered.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about Royal Air Force air defence capability.

Mr Stanley: The only representation received recently is a letter from my hon. Friend.

"A Nuclear Free Europe? Why it Wouldn't Work"

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many copies of the publication, "A Nuclear Free Europe? Why it Wouldn't Work", were printed; how many were distributed; and what was the total cost.

Mr. Stanley: "A Nuclear Free Europe? Why it Wouldn't Work" was published in 1982. From such records as are now available, it is estimated that 30,000 copies were printed, of which approximately 13,000 have been distributed so far. The total cost of production is estimated as £2,459.

Fighter Pilots

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Royal Air Force's current shortfall in operationally trained fighter pilots.

Mr. Freeman: The RAF has sufficient operationally trained air defence and fast jet pilots to fill all front-line cockpits and operationally related ground appointments.

Observation Posts (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 April 1987, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the locations of the 40 observation points on Gwynedd at which rainfall measurements are taken.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A list of the meteorological observing stations in Gwynedd, showing the location name and national grid reference of each, is as follows:

	Grid reference
Llanymawddwy, Troed-y-Foel	2910 3195
Aberangell, Esgairangell	2829 3105
Aberdovey	2605 2960
Llanegryn, Peniarth	2612 3054
Buarthre Newydd	2745 3259
Dolgellau	2728 3187
Talsarnau	2610 3361
Ffestiniog, Minafon	2716 3433
Trawsfyndd Power Station	2695 3390
Llydaw Intake	2636 3547
Nantmor	2603 3463
Porthmadog Power Station	2569 3391
Cwmystradllyn, Lower	2557 3442
Pant Glas, Bwlchderwin	2459 3472
Botwnnog School	2263 3313
Bardsey: Lighthouse	2112 3206
Edern Primary School	2277 3393
Glynllifon Park	2455 3554
Anglesey: Llansadwrn, Gladlys Lodge	2553 3758
Anglesey: Cefni Reservoir	2444 3772
Anglesey: Valley Met Office	2309 3757
Anglesey: Holyhead, Ty Mawr	2217 3818
Anglesey: Llyn Alaw	2376 3853
Angelsey: Amlwch, Penrhyd	2427 3914
Anglesey: Llwydiarth Esgob	2436 3843
Anglesey: Plan Cadnant	2557 3731
Pen-y-Ffridd Research Station	2563 3705
Aber, College Farm	2656 3732
Conway Mussel Tanks	2785 3773
Yspytty-Ifan Treatment Works	2811 3456
Vdelas Hall	2851 3516
Betws-y-Coed Field Centre	2803 3571
Belmont	2815 3569
Llanrwst, Gwydyr Uchaf	2796 3608
Cowlyd	2738 3635
Coedty Reservoir	2756 3668
Tal-y-Cafn, Penrhyd	2791 3718

	Grid reference
Bodnant	2800 3725
Llanuwchllyn	2878 3298
Tryweryn Dam No 2	2881 3399
Bala Sluices	2935 3356

Diver Training (Portsmouth)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if trainee divers from the Royal Engineering Diving Establishment at HMS Vernon are still training on the mudflats in Portsmouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are a variety of diving courses which are held at the Royal Engineers Diving Establishment at Portsmouth. These comprise a basic five and a half-week course, a seven and a half-week advanced course and a three-week diving supervisors course. In addition, there are two day diving aptitude tests held for Army personnel who wish to be considered for training to become a qualified Army diver. In order to carry out diving, it is sometimes considered necessary for trainees to cross mudflats at low tide in order to reach the training area. In addition, for all diving training, an element of endurance training in dry suits is necessary. Military diving is an arduous and potentially dangerous activity often carried out in unpleasant conditions. Divers need to be fit, adaptable and determined.

Divers are frequently required to wear dry suits for long periods and to carry out physically demanding tasks while wearing dry suits, both in and out of water. Endurance training in dry suits is a necessary and relevant part of both diver aptitude testing and subsequent diver training. There is no "mud-run" for personnel undergoing diver aptitude testing, but for those undergoing the formal diving training programme endurance training in dry suits is a necessary and relevant part of both diver aptitude testing and subsequent diver training. There is no "mud-run" for personnel undergoing diver aptitude testing, but for those undergoing the formal diving training programme endurance training in dry suits may include training on mud. All endurance training is strictly supervised by fully qualified instructors.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what technical investigations have taken place in the Gillingham area into the disposal of radioactive waste from the royal dockyards; and what have been the results of the technical investigations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to dispose of radioactive waste from the royal dockyards in the Gillingham area. A small quantity of radioactive material is stored at MOD Gillingham and this will be removed to a permanent disposal site whenever one is available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what technical investigations have taken place at Rosyth into the possible storage of radioactive waste within the dockyard or naval base; and what have been the results of the technical investigations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has carried out a comprehensive hazard analysis of the current facilities and procedures for handling radioactive waste, so as to permit the Rosyth dockyard and naval base to support the RN's fleet of nuclear submarines.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has set aside funds for the building of a new facility for storage of radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A new facility is planned and funds will be available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what new policy decisions have been made *(a)* within the last two years and *(b)* within the last six months about the disposal, transportation and storage of radioactive waste created as a result of nuclear submarine refits at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It had been intended that one of the near-surface radioactive waste burial sites being investigated by NIREX would accept low-level and short-lived intermediate level waste from Rosyth. However, the Government, in responding to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste, published on 12 March 1986, decided that the chosen NIREX near-surface burial site should accept only low-level waste. Short-lived intermediate waste will now have to be stored until other arrangements can be made.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about future plans for the storage of radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard and naval base at Drigg.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Low-level radioactive waste from Rosyth dockyard and naval base will continue to be sent for disposal at the shallow land burial site at Drigg until the new NIREX near-surface burial site is in operation, what that will be used.

Gruinard Island

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the results of the decontamination of Gruinard Island.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have now received the conclusions of the independent advisory group which has been reviewing the evidence on the efficacy of the decontamination treatment. The IAG has reported that it is convinced that the decontamination has worked well and considers on the basis of the evidence that the island could now be returned to civil ownership. The IAG has recommended, and I have accepted, that before the island is so returned, it should be demonstrated both to the group and to the general public that the whole island can be used in the same way as agricultural land on the mainland. This demonstration will be achieved by a local farmer shepherding part of his flock on the island during the coming summer.

Defence Contracts

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the companies or subsidiaries of companies based in Scotland, which are currently engaged in defence contracts or subcontracts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1987, c. *874*]: I regret that the information required could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General whether he will waive current charges relating to caution registrations using form 63/13, where protracted delays have occurred in the processing of registrations at district land registries.

The Attorney-General: Delays in the processing of appliations do not give rise to any need for the registering of cautions since the priority of such an application is determined by the date upon which it is received by the registry and not by the date upon which the certificate is issued.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what fees have been collected for the most convenient period in connection with registration of cautions using form 63/14 resulting from delays in registration of residential property.

The Attorney-General: About 850 caution applications are currently received each week. The fee for each application using form 63/14 is £20. There is no reason for believing that any of these cautions are lodged by applicants for registration concerned about delays in processing their applications since the priority of such applications is determined by the date upon which they are received by the Registry and not by the date upon which the certificate is issued.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what were current levels of staff in each of the district land registries at the most recent convenient date; and whether he has any plans to deploy more staff to reduce current delays in registration of residential property.

The Attorney-General: The permanent staff in posts at the end of February 1987 at each of the district land registries was as shown in the table below:

Office	*Number*
Croydon	478
Harrow	514
Tunbridge Wells	624
Lytham	531
Nottingham	670
Gloucester	680
Stevenage	612
Durham	459
Plymouth	513
Swansea	383
Birkenhead	381
Weymouth	444
Peterborough	430

In addition to the 13 district land registries, offices have recently been established at Telford and Coventry which together account for a further 111 staff. 555 casual staff are currently employed at district land registries. This is further supplemented by overtime. This level of staffing takes up the full authorised resources. As from 2 April 1987 a further 376 staff have been authorised at district registries and are being recruited and trained. The extent to which these will help to reduce current delays will largely depend on the levels of applications.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General whether he will publish the surplus or deficit position on current transactions relating to each land registry district office in the last five years.

The Attorney-General: The Land Registry's revenue in the registration of title department exceeded expenditure by £64·5 million in the five financial years 1981-86. Profit and loss accounts are not separately maintained for individual district registries.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what is the current length of time taken by each of the district land registries to register residential properties after application; and whether any steps are being taken to expedite current levels of performance.

The Attorney-General: The table shows at each district land registry the average completion times in working days at the end of February 1987 for each category of substantive application.

Office	*First registrations*	*Transfer of part/ dispositionary first lease*	*Dealing*	*All categories*
Croydon	60	85	52	65
Harrow	60	126	67	90
Tunbridge Wells	160	180	58	72
Lytham	118	83	54	78
Nottingham	150	106	25	90
Gloucester	110	135	60	92
Stevenage	160	115	51	78
Durham	89	66	42	70
Plymouth	149	142	69	106
Swansea	107	77	40	81
Birkenhead	65	70	40	54
Weymouth	109	75	49	73
Peterborough	101	87	25	72

A number of steps have been taken to shorten the time taken up in dealing with applications for registration. These include computerisation, overtime, recruitment, opening new offices and improvements in practice and procedure.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what steps the Land Registry is taking in the light of the long current waiting periods for registration of residential property to protect applicants against the creation of further equitable interests.

The Attorney-General: The priority of an application to register a purchase or mortgage is determined according to the date upon which the application is received by the Registry. Accordingly, the lodging of such an application will give the purchaser or mortgagee priority over any third party interests subsequently created.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what advice the Land Registry is issuing to applicants for registration who are likely to have to face delays for longer than 20 weeks.

The Attorney-General: When a new title application is lodged for registration, an acknowledgement card is sent indicating the likely number of weeks that the Land Registry will take to process the application. It contains a note explaining that if a delay in completing the registration will cause specific problems (for example, because of a pending resale of the property) and the Registry is informed every effort will be made to process the application as quickly as possible.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what was the last occasion when the work load of the Land Registry was assessed in relation to current levels of staff employed; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Land Registry's work load and staffing was assessed in April 1986 when the preparatory work was undertaken for the 1986 public expenditure survey.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what representations he has received from conveyancers, solicitors or their representative organisations on the delays relating to registration of residential property by the Land Registry.

The Attorney-General: During the last 12 months the Lord Chancellor has received some 12 letters of enquiry from solicitors and one from a conveyancing company regarding delays at the Land Registry. Some of these inquiries were general; some related to specific transactions. No formal representations have been received from representative organisations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

India (Visa Applications)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of personnel employed by the British high commission in India dealing with visa applications in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The establishment of entry clearance officers (and above) dealing with applications at each of our posts in India on 1 January of each year was as follows:

	New Delhi	*Bombay*	*Calcutta*	*Madras*
1979	5	4	1	1
1980	5	4	1	[1]1
1981	5	6	1	0
1982	5	5	1	0
1983	6	6	1	0
1984	6	6	1	0
1985	6	6	1	0
1986	6	6	1	0
1987	11	10	2	[2]2

[1] Immigration work transferred to Bombay March 1980 but resumed in Madras in October 1986 with the introduction of the visa regime.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average waiting time for applications from citizens of India for entry visas to the United Kingdom at the latest date.

Mr. Eggar: Figures published for the last quarter of 1986 show that the waiting time for settlement entry clearance applicants was between two and 11 months in New Delhi and between four and 12 months in Bombay. There are no settlement queues in Madras and Calcutta.

All applications for short-term entry clearance are considered within 24 hours. Of the estimated 13 per cent. needing further examination, the waiting time for those now applying in April is 10 days in New Delhi, one day in Bombay and three in Madras.

Diplomatic Service

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many women currently hold the position of ambassador, high commissioner or chargé d'affaires within Her Majesty's diplomatic service.

Mr. Eggar: One woman currently holds the position of ambassador. No women currently hold that of high commissioner or chargé d'affaires.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of Bangladesh concerning the number of Bangladeshi families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Commonwealth Secretariat

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the move of the Commonwealth Secretariat to No. 2 Carlton gardens while Marlborough house is refurbished.

Mr. Eggar: On 6 April a memorandum of understanding was signed at Malborough house by the Secretary of State for the Environment on behalf of the British Government and the Commonwealth Secretary-General, covering arrangements relating to the move which will take place at Easter. Necessary refurbishment of the centre block of Marlborough house is expected to take about three and a half years to complete, following which the secretariat will reoccupy the premises.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Racial Incidents

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many racial incidents have been reported in the London borough of Waltham Forest in each of the past four years; and how many have resulted in a conviction.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to replies I gave to his question on 26 February 1987 at column *344*

and to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Banks) on 4 December 1986 at columns 711-14. Information about convictions could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Nursing Advisory Council

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the members of the Nursing Advisory Council set up to advise the head prison nursing services in developing the professional competence of prison hospital officers and nurses.

Mr. Mellor: The members of the advisory committee are Mr. Peter Barker, head of prison nursing services (chairman): Mr. J. K. Berry, hospital chief officer, HM prison Wormwood Scrubs; Mrs. J. Elliott, senior sister, HM prison Cookham Wood; Mr. D. Gooderham, English national board; Mr. D. N. Harrison, hospital chief officer, HM prison Wandsworth; Mr. J. Kay, Prison Officers' Association; Mr. A. Lee, chief nursing officer, Park Lane special hospital; Mr. P. Mellor, Royal College of Nursing; Mr. J. Tait, principal nursing officer, Department of Health and Social Security; and Mr. A. Taylor, Prison Officers' Association.

Police (Complaints)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances and why he set aside in Home Office guidance the requirement that consent to complaints being made against police officers must be given in writing.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The requirement for a member of the public to give consent in writing to a third party to make a complaint on his behalf is to be found in section 84(4) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. It neither can be nor has been set aside in Home Office guidance.

Deportation Orders

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many deportation orders were made in England and Wales in each year since 1979 to the latest date;

(2) how many deportation orders were made in *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside in each year since 1979;

(3) how many deportation orders were made in Northern Ireland in each year since 1979 to the latest date.

Mr. Waddington: Deportation orders for the whole of the United Kingdom are dealt with by the Home Office. The total numbers of deportation orders made in the United Kingdom are published annually in "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom". Table 12 of the issue for 1985 (Cmnd. 9863) covers the years 1975-85. The total for 1986 was published in table 14 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 3/87. Information by area of the United Kingdom is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Immigration

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications for permanent leave to remain were granted in *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside in each calendar year since 1979 to the latest date;

(2) how many applications were made for permanent leave to remain in *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside in each calendar year since 1979 to the latest date.

Mr. Waddington: The total numbers of persons granted settlement in the United Kingdom are published annually in "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom". Table 15 of the issue for 1985 (Cmnd. 9863) gives totals for the years 1975 to 1985. The total for 1986 was published in table 2 of Home Office statistical bulletin 3/87. Corresponding information on the total numbers of applications made and for particular areas of the United Kingdom is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration cases were dealt with by the Liverpool immigration office in each year since 1979 to the latest date.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is as follows:

	Passengers arriving at ports (including Liverpool airport)	*Seamen seeking leave to discharge from ships*	*Applications for leave to remain and cases involving illegal entry and deportation and interviews related to applications for entry clearances*
1979	154,927	3,772	90
1980	69,620	3,449	311
1981	30,030	2,543	607
1982	18,631	2,364	1,722
1983	24,496	2,632	2,434
1984	22,394	2,043	2,786
1985	25,923	1,759	3,199
1986	10,781	1,951	6,025

Visa Applications

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications were made for entry visas in India in each year since 1979; and how many were granted in each year to the latest date.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is given in the following table:

Applications in India for entry clearance to the United Kingdom[1]

Number of persons

	Applications received[2]	*Applications granted*
1979	24,510	20,180
1980	18,110	17,010
1981	14,640	13,910
1982	11,320	9,810
1983	11,100	8,650
1984	9,870	8,000
1985	8,020	6,440
1986	29,500	26,230

[1] For settlement or temporary purposes
[2] Including applications which were subsequently withdrawn

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants were employed in his Department dealing with visa applications from *(a)* Commonwealth and *(b)* non-Commonwealth countries in each year since 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Waddington: Many staff in the Immigration and Nationality Department carry out interviews and deal

with inquiries relating to applications for visas and other forms of entry clearance as part of their general duties, but their numbers cannot readily be assessed. Since Autumn 1986, four members of staff of the Immigration and Nationality Department have been engaged on the issue of re-entry visas. In addition staff of the passport department have been engaged on the issue of re-entry visas as follows:

1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
17	21	22

Figures for earlier years are not available; and it is not possible to differentiate between Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth work.

Metropolitan Police (Special Safety Procedures)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the Metropolitan police special safety procedures regarding the no-go or difficult-to-police areas in London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am told by the Commissioner that no such document exists.

Bramshill Police Training College

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what were the original estimates for each aspect of the installation of the control and command centre at Bramshill police training college; what were the eventual costs of each contract; and which companies completed the works at the college;

(2) which companies were awarded contracts in connection with the installation of the control and command centre at Bramshill police training college;

(3) what was the initial estimate for the control and command simulation centre at Bramshill police training college.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the simulated operations complex which is being constructed at the police staff college, Bramshill to extend the training facilities there. A contract for the construction of the building was initially awarded to W. E. Chivers and Sons Ltd., with the main sub-contracts being awarded to Drake and Scull Ltd. and to Electrical Installations Ltd. The original estimate, at November 1983 prices and subject to variation of price in respect of labour and materials, was £1,771,000 which included £262,500 for mechanical services, £173,775 for electrical services and £200,000 for fees. Subsequently W. E. Chivers and Sons Ltd. was placed in the hands of receivers; the contract with the company was terminated and Drake and Scull Ltd. withdrew. A new contract to complete the construction was awarded to Lovell Construction (Southern) Ltd., and a new sub-contract for mechanical services awarded to Planned Maintenance Engineering Ltd. Payments to W. E. Chivers and Sons Ltd. totalled £271,699 subject to claims for damages. It is not possible to give the final cost of the other contracts because work will not be completed before the end of 1987.

Prison Hospitals

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of hospital rooms in prison hospitals will be provided with integral sanitation, and when he expects this work to be completed.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not collected centrally in the form requested. I will write to the hon. Member when the available information has been assembled.

Prison Establishments (Nursing Cover)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to provide 24-hour on-call nursing cover in all prison establishments.

Mr. Mellor: No. It is the policy of the Director of Prison Medical Services to provide 24-hour medical cover in all establishments and 24-hour nursing cover in those establishments where that is judged to be necessary.

Prison Hospital Staff (Training)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the review of the training needs of prison hospital staff in relation to the taking of X-rays, referred to in the Government's reply to recommendation 8 in the third report of the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86, to be completed.

Mr. Mellor: It is hoped to complete the review by late summer.

Mentally Disordered Prisoners

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made by the joint Home Office/Department of Health and Social Security working group examining the problems of mentally disordered people in prison.

Mr. Mellor: The working group of Home Office and DHSS officials considering the problems presented by mentally disordered offenders in the prison system will report back to Ministers in May.

Prisoners (Medical Attention)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will instruct all prison officers that in all circumstances any prisoner asking to see a doctor should be able to do so.

Mr. Mellor: Prison rules require that every request by a prisoner to see the medical officer shall be recorded by the officer to whom it is made and promptly passed on to the medical officer. There is no reason to think that prison staff need to be reminded of the requirement.

Drug Abuses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects discussions to be completed between the prison department and the probation service aimed at creating a framework for treatment and rehabilitation programmes for drug abusers whilst in custody and after release into the community; whether voluntary agencies are also being consulted about such a framework; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We expect the discussions between the prison department and the probation service to be concluded shortly.

These discussions are aimed at improving the cohesion at establishment level of existing effort to help drug misusers in prison, with particular reference to the interface between the prison medical service and the probation service, and of developing that effort across the prison system. Consultation with voluntary agencies about the framework would be inappropriate; however establishments will be encouraged to consider the contribution which suitable drug counselling facilities in the community may be able to make.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide such estimates as are available as to the number of potential electors who have failed to register for the current register; how this compares with each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The most recent estimates are those made by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in a published survey of electoral registration. The survey indicated that in 1981, 6·5 per cent. of eligible people in Great Britain were not included in the electoral register for their qualifying address. This compared with a figure of 3·5 to 4 per cent. found in a comparable survey in 1961. The Home Office has taken a range of initiatives in the light of the 1981 survey aimed at increasing the accuracy of the electoral register. We shall be continuing to work for improvements.

Mr. David Sands

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Hampshire about the police visit to the home of Mr. David Sands prior to his death; and if he will state the branch and specialisation of the officers involved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Hampshire that police officers went to Mr. Sands's home on the evening of 28 March 1987 after his wife had reported him missing. The officers involved were local uniformed police officers.

Electors (Absent Votes)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce an amendment to the Representation of the People Regulations to allow electors who have moved house to make application for an absent vote, which will continue without further application until such time as the applicant is no longer qualified for registration at his old address; and if he will remove the new requirement that such applications need to be attested.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any change which allowed people who moved house to retain an absent vote for the duration of the current electoral register would require an amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1985, for which we have no present plans. We are not at present persuaded that the regulations should exempt people who have moved house, but no other applicants, from the necessity to have their applications attested.

Guildford Pub Bombings

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why no mention was made in his Department's memorandum on the Guildford bombing case of the medical inquiry into the condition of Carole Richardson conducted at the request of the senior medical officer at HM remand centre, Risley, in April 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times Paul Hill, serving a sentence for the Guildford pub bombings, was moved before being placed in Wormword Scrubs.

Mr. Mellor: Since returning to prison following his trial in 1975, 36 times.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received requesting an inquiry into the case of the four people convicted of the Guildford pub bombings.

Mr. Mellor: Since my right hon. Friend's statement of 20 January at columns *735-38* we have received 125 letters about this case. Fifty-eight are in the form of a circular letter. The letters variously express concern about the convictions, and 58 ask us to review the case further. One requests an inquiry.

Scientists (Deaths)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Avon about the police investigation into the deaths of two scientists in Bristol in 1986; and if he will state the branch and specialisation of the police officers involved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Avon and Somerset that the police investigation into the deaths of Mr. Dajibhai and Mr. Sharif have been completed. The coroner recorded an open verdict in the case of Mr. Dajibhai and a verdict of suicide in the case of Mr. Sharif. The police investigation was conducted by divisional CID officers under the supervision of a senior CID officer at Headquarters.

Member's Correspondence

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, dated 20 February, about a prisoner in Her Majesty's prison, Long Lartin.

Mr. Mellor: I wrote to the hon. Member on 7 April.

Senior Police Officers (Resignation)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to review the regulations that govern the resignation and subsequent taking up of other employment of a senior police officer from the Metropolitan and City of London police forces.

Mr. Hogg: The provisions relating to the resignation of police officers are contained in the Police Regulations 1979 and the Police Pensions Regulations 1987. We have no present plans to amend them.

Ferry Passengers (Identification)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with the French authorities about his proposal that ferry companies should carry out identity checks on intending passengers to the United Kingdom before they are allowed to embark at French ports; and whether the French authorities are agreeable to his proposals.

Mr. Waddington: Officials have confirmed with the French authorities that there are no obstacles to the proposals in French law.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill on the number of immigration officers to be stationed at British ports.

Mr. Waddington: We have no plans to change the number of immigration officers available at British ports as a result of the Bill.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the European Commission on the implications of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill for Her Majesty's Government's obligations under the EEC treaties.

Mr. Waddington: None.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had any requests to compensate ferry, passenger ship and airline carriers for the extra duties liable to arise as a result of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill.

Mr. Waddington: No.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Republic of Ireland (Meetings)

9. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland; and what was discussed.

Mr. Tom King: I met the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lenihan on Monday. We had an informal discussion on a wide range of matters, including the future work of the conference. I look forward to working with Mr. Lenihan as co-chairman of the conference in the months ahead, in the interests of both our countries. In addition, yesterday under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union I had a valuable discussion with a distinguished delegation of Members of the Dail.

Housing Executive

13. **Mr. Mallon** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had within the last six months with the chairman of the board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Needham: None, but I met the chairman in November 1986, when reviewing the Housing Executive's performance in meeting its strategic aims.

Fair Employment Agency

14. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had recently with officials of the Fair Employment Agency.

Mr. Viggers: I have had no such discussions recently.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has now received the full text of the Sampson report on the conduct of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and related matters.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a further statement on the Sampson inquiry into matters concerning the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Tom King: I understand that Mr. Sampson submitted further material to the Chief Constable of the RUC recently. A copy was also given to the Director of Public Prosecutions. When the whole report has been received by the Chief Constable and the DPP(NI) and the Chief Constable has had an opportunity to place his comments before the DPP, the DPP will decide, after consultation with the Attorney-General, what directions to give as to criminal proceedings.

As I have already informed the House, I will make a statement to Parliament at the earliest appropriate time on any aspects of the report that fall within my responsibility.

Higher Education

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement detailing what figures or estimates are available to him on the likely inflow to Northern Ireland in coming years of higher education students from the Republic of Ireland, following the European ruling with regard to payment of fees for European Community nations;

(2) if he will make a statement outlining what assessment the Government have made of the repercussions on demand for student places in Northern Ireland of the new European Community arrangement; and whether such trends in demand will influence Government planning in relation to courses, college development or grants;

(3) if he will make a statement indicating whether the Government have plans to seek, with authorities in the Republic of Ireland, the establishment of mechanisms to regularise, control or facilitate entry to higher education courses in Northern Ireland by students from the Republic of Ireland in the light of European Community arrangements.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is too early to gauge the long-term effect on participation in higher education in Northern Ireland, or indeed in the United Kingdom generally, of the Government's decision to reimburse the fees of EC students. For the foreseeable future the planned provision for higher education in Northern Ireland will be able to respond to demand from home, EC and overseas students, and we have no plans at present to establish new entry mechanisms for students from the Republic of Ireland.

Open Tech

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement indicating current and projected provision for Open Tech in Northern Ireland, outlining how such provision is or will be channelled.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the current financial year, £200,000 is being made available. It is expected that at least similar provision will be made in subsequent years, subject to review. This is channelled through the Northern Ireland Open Tech centre.

Interpreters for the Deaf

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what support his Department has given in each of the last three years to organisations training interpreters for the deaf in Northern Ireland; and if he will specify how much in each year has been given for administration and for training.

Mr. Needham: In the last three years the Department of Health and Social Services has provided the following grant-aid *(a)* to enable deaf organisations to provide courses for deaf tutors or *(b)* to enable officers of deaf organisations to undertake courses in England leading to certificates in sign communication skills:

	£
1984-85	Nil
1985-86	887
1986-87	2,740

In addition, a seeding grant of £35,000 was made in March 1987 to enable the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People to commence a training programme in communication skills in Northern Ireland.

RUC-Strathclyde Police (Liaison)

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on operational liaison between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Strathclyde police concerning anti-terrorist activities.

Mr. Scott: I know that the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Strathclyde police maintain a close operational liaison on matters of mutual interest, including terrorism. These matters are, of course, confidential to the two forces.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Debt Rescheduling

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *531*, if he will list in the *Official Report* the amounts involved in each debt rescheduling agreement; whether the agreement was defaulted; and whether the agreement was made by the Export Credits Guarantee Department or the Overseas Development Agency.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Debt Rescheduling Agreements Made Between United Kingdom and Other Countries Since 1979

(£ millions)

Country and Date Agreement Signed	*ECGD Amount Involved*	*ODA Amount Involved*
Bolivia		
21 January 1987		0·05
Brazil		
13 December 1984	147·95	
31 December 1984		0·96
Central African Republic		
18 April 1986	0·50	
Chile		
29 April 1986	0·34	
Costa Rica		
12 March 1984	0·71	
25 September 1984		0·93
30 January 1986	0·60	
Cote D'Ivoire		
10 January 1985	5·40	
17 October 1986	3·99	
Cuba		
22 July 1983	9·84	
3 October 1985	6·93	
12 November 1986	5·45	
Ecuador		
18 June 1984	15·57	
29 January 1986	23·64	
Jamaica		
27 December 1984		5·86
13 May 1985	1·63	
27 December 1985		3·03
6 February 1986	1·03	
Liberia		
26 October 1982	1·26	
26 January 1984	2·83	
8 October 1984	1·75	
Madagascar		
4 April 1982	1·66	
21 May 1983	1·65	
7 January 1985	4·46	
18 December 1985	4·07	
Malawi		
7 July 1983	1·48	
29 August 1984	1·97	
Mauritania		
9 July 1986	2·64	
Mexico		
31 January 1985	22·19	
Morocco		
17 October 1984	11·17	
20 August 1986	0·87	
Mozambique		
13 August 1986	22·93	
Niger		
11 October 1984	2·26	
7 March 1985	1·22	
28 September 1986	1·15	
Peru		
27 April 1979		0·10

Country and Date Agreement Signed	ECGD Amount Involved	ODA Amount Involved
12 December 1979	6·85	
12 March 1984	9·37	
Philippines		
4 February 1986	36·15	
Poland		
2 July 1981	93·01	
30 November 1985	542·47	
7 August 1986	86·64	
Romania		
26 November 1982	26·68	
8 December 1983	11·02	
Senegal		
1 September 1982	0·76	
11 January 1984	0·51	
12 November 1985	0·99	
12 November 1985	0·46	
Sierra Leone		
30 June 1980	0·25	
17 October 1985	1·10	
Somalia		
14 August 1986	13·34	
Sudan		
25 August 1980	23·90	
25 August 1983	11·41	
25 January 1984	120·43	
Togo		
18 June 1980	6·72	
27 April 1982	7·13	
9 February 1984	9·08	
5 February 1985	1·28	
Turkey		
20 December 1979	12·45	
5 December 1986	99·65	
Uganda		
17 June 1983	10·81	
10 November 1983	3·29	
Yugoslavia		
6 December 1984	36·59	
7 February 1986	73·51	
Zaire		
26 September 1979	1·30	
28 July 1983	7·11	
28 July 1983	2·44	
14 November 1984	42·17	
7 July 1986	5·81	
Zambia		
30 December 1983	17·86	
15 February 1985	18·98	
31 July 1985		1·74
20 August 1986	50·24	
31 October 1986		2·53

Debt Service Payments and Aid

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* the level of debt service payments to the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government and commercial banks, from all developing countries in 1985, both in cash terms and as a proportion of the total of such payments to the world.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is not available.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *472*, to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), if he will state the level of total aid flows to the 29 poorest countries in Africa, and the level of debt service payments from those countries in 1984.

Mr. Ian Stewart: OECD estimate that in 1984 total aid flows to the 29 poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa were $6·5 billion. Debt service payments (including interest on short term debt but excluding IMF repurchases) were $3·4 billion.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in central Government spending in each year since 1979, expressed in cash and in real terms; and what are the comparable figures for local government, giving in both cases the percentage annual increases.

Mr. MacGregor: The figures requested are given below:

£ billion

	[1]Central government			[1]Local authorities		
	[2]Cash	Real	Per cent. change year on year in real terms	[2]Cash	Real	Per cent. change year on year in real terms
1979-80	52·2	84·5	—	21·5	34·8	—
1980-81	63·4	86·5	2·3	25·0	34·1	−2·1
1981-82	73·0	90·6	4·8	26·6	33·0	−3·2
1982-83	81·4	94·2	4·0	29·1	33·7	2·2
1983-84	85·1	94·3	0·1	33·2	36·8	9·0
1984-85	92·1	97·8	3·7	34·9	37·1	1·0
1985-86	98·5	98·5	0·7	35·2	35·2	−5·1
1986-87	105·0	101·8	3·4	38·1	37·0	4·9

[1] The figures exclude finance for nationalised industries and other public corporations.

[2] Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices—base year 1985-86.

Source: The figures are consistent with the 1987 public expenditure White Paper as updated by the 1987 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Superannuation Funds Office

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the Superannuation Funds Office has returned to employers pension schemes submitted to it for approval before Budget day.

Mr. Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Privatisation

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's policy towards the eventual privatisation of all nationalised industries and public corporations.

Mr. Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

WALES

National Curriculum

Sir Anthony Meyer asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans for a national curriculum in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes. Children in Wales are entitled to a school curriculum that is guaranteed to include the basic requirements of a sound education.

The legislation to enable a national curriculum to be prescribed which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced to the Select Committee for Education and Science of this House on Tuesday 7 April will also apply to Wales.

The core requirements of education in England and Wales are the same. Children in both countries deserve the same guarantee of a well-balanced foundation curriculum and I see every reason to expect that we should set the same attainment levels in Wales for basic subjects such as maths, English and science. That means that there needs to be the fullest involvement of all those concerned in Wales in the debates that will formulate the foundation curriculum. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced that we would be appointing a number of very strong working groups to advise on suitable attainment targets and the writing of the programmes to make sure these targets are achieved. Wales will be represented on these working groups and my officials will be co-operating closely with those of the Department of Education and Science in developing these proposals.

There are also very real educational differences between England and Wales that need to be provided for. Welsh children must continue to have the opportunity to benefit from the distinctive elements in the Welsh curriculum. We shall want to ensure that the national curriculum has the flexibility to take full account of Welsh history and culture. We shall also need to ensure that proper provision is made for children who study through the medium of the Welsh language.

There is a wide measure of consensus that a national curriculum is now needed. The Government's firm belief is that it is possible and necessary to achieve the broadest agreement on the content of that curriculum on the basis of the best advice available. I look for a wide debate in Wales on our own particular needs and the closest involvement with the discussions throughout England and Wales which will contribute to the national curriculum.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average farm income in Wales for the latest available period; what are the comparable figures in member states of the EEC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Data relating to farm incomes in the EEC and Wales are published in the Communities publication '"Farm Accounts Results 1982-83 — 1983-84", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. However, care must be taken to appreciate the limitations of this material as is made clear by the notes to the text.

Clwyd

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the amount received in Clwyd in the form of the various loans and grants by the European Economic Community for each of the years of United Kingdom membership.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Comprehensive information is not available at the county level. Details of identifiable EC grants and loans are as follows:

Calendar years (£ million net)

Source of aid	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*Total*
European Regional Development Fund-Quota	—	—	0·5	1·9	1·1	0·3	3·4	6·5	2·8	5·9	9·7	4·1	18·3	19·1	[1]73·6
European Regional Development Fund-Non Quota	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−2·7	—	1·8	—	0·3	[1]4·8
European Coal and Steel Community	—	—	—	—	1·0	16·1	5·1	27·9	13·4	5·1	28·9	5·0	—	—	[1]102·5
European Investment Bank	—	—	17·5	—	—	—	7·6	4·0	—	—	—	—	20·0	[2]3·5	52·6
European Social Fund	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·04	—	0·1	0·3	0·1	0·7	[4]—	1·24
European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[5]—
TOTAL			18·0	1·9	2·1	16·4	16·1	38·44	16·2	13·8	38·9	11·0	39·0	22·9	234·74

[1] Figures are net of decommitments which have been effected in the event of approved projects not proceeding as originally envisaged.
[2] Figures for 1985 and 1986 are not available.
[3] Figures available only to end of June 1986.
[4] Figures exclude grant aid on schemes operated on a national and regional basis eg by the Manpower Services Commission.
[5] Grants from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee cannot be split between counties. The Wales total to date is £343·3 million.

Singleton Hospital (Casualty Unit)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) why the proposal for an accident and emergency consultant for the Singleton casualty unit was referred to the Welsh Medical Manpower Committee; and in what circumstances he can make such a decision without referral to that committee;

(2) when he expects the proposal for an accident and emergency consultant for the casualty unit at Singleton hospital to be put before the Welsh Medical Manpower Committee; by what criteria that committee makes its recommendations; when he expects to be able to announce a final decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Approval for the establishment of a new consultant post by a district health authority in Wales is a matter ultimately for my right hon. Friend. By agreement with the medical and dental professions, my Department's consideration of applications for the establishment of such posts follows on advice from the Welsh Medical and Dental Manpower Committee, which is composed of leading members of the professions in Wales.

In considering any particular proposal, the Committee generally has regard to all the circumstances of that case: this will normally include service need, the professional content of the proposed post and its location within the operational and professional structure of the health authority.

My Department has requested further information from the West Glamorgan district health authority about its proposal to resolve the operational difficulties of providing 24-hour cover at the accident and emergency Unit at Singleton hospital through the establishment of a new consultant post. When that information is to hand, the question of manpower approval will be remitted to the Welsh Medical and Dental Manpower Committee for consideration at its next scheduled meeting. The committee is next due to meet on 7 July.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in south Pembrokeshire; how many have been unemployed for *(a)* five years, *(b)* four years, *(c)* three years and *(d)* one year; what percentage unemployment this represents; and how many were unemployed in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Numbers of unemployed and unemployment rates for the travel-to-work area of South Pembrokeshire between January 1984 and January 1987 are given in the following table. Comparable information is not available before this date.

Unemployment by duration: South Pembrokeshire TTWA

Duration of unemployment	*January 1984*		*January 1985*		*January 1986*		*January 1987*	
	Number	*Rate*	*Number*	*Rate*	*Number*	*Rate*	*Number*	*Rate*
Up to 1 year	2,148	16·0	2,249	16·2	2,383	17·2	2,502	18·0
Over 1 and up to 3 years	570	4·2	687	4·9	758	5·5	552	4·0
Over 3 and up to 4 years	87	0·6	116	0·8	160	1·2	111	0·8
Over 4 and up to 5 years	17	0·1	60	0·4	93	0·7	98	0·7
Over 5 years	30	0·2	40	0·3	72	0·5	107	0·8
All Durations	2,852	21·2	3,152	22·7	3,466	25·0	3,370	24·3

Source: NOMIS

Comparisons between January 1987 and earlier years should be made with caution due to a change in the method of compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will investigate delays in paying the hill livestock compensatory allowance to farmers in Gwynedd during the past quarter of the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There were no delays—76·5 per cent. of HLCA claims received in Gwynedd were passed for payment before 31 March and this compares with 67·4 per cent. in 1985. It is not meaningful to make a comparison with 1986 because in that year, a system of advance payments operated.

Welsh Language

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of infant and junior school pupils were taught Welsh in the latest year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1985, 59 per cent. of infant and 72 per cent. of junior pupils were taught Welsh, either as a first or second language.

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of each age group of secondary school pupils were taught Welsh in the latest year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The percentage of secondary school pupils in September 1985 who were taught Welsh was:

Per cent.

	As a first language	*As a second language*	*Total*
Form I	11	68	79
Form II	11	62	73
Form III	11	50	61
Form IV	10	18	28
Form V	10	17	27
Form VI	4	3	7

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the change in the number of bilingual primary and secondary schools in the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Between 1981-82 and 1985-86 the number of bilingual primary schools increased from 62 to 67 and the number of bilingual secondary schools increased from 13 to 16. The figures are as follows:

	Primary	*Secondary*
1981-82	62	13
1982-83	64	13
1983-84	64	14
1984-85	64	16
1985-86	67	16

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of examination entries through the medium of Welsh since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Level	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Advanced:								
Entries	364	319	374	440	481	540	519	623
Subject	15	19	18	19	15	20	16	17
Ordinary:								
Entries	2,255	2,861	3,601	3,785	3,857	4,412	4,500	5,333
Subject	28	31	33	32	31	35	34	39
CSE:								
Entries	1,689	2,047	2,372	2,605	2,745	2,705	2,299	2,023
Subjects	31	33	34	38	41	39	37	35

TVEI

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy concerning Manpower Services Commission funding of Welsh-medium technical and vocational education initiative schemes.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The technical and vocational education initiative is administered by the Manpower Services Commission in consultation with Education Departments. Local education authorities bid for funding to support such developments.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance his Department has offered to the Manpower Services Commission concerning the funding of Welsh-medium technical and vocational education initiative schemes.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My Department has made clear to the Manpower Services Commission my interest in Welsh language matters.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales why the 1986 application by the Welsh Joint Education Committee to the Manpower Services Commission for a four-year £1 million Welsh-medium technical and vocational education activities project was rejected.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Within the funds available and in the light of the announcement to extend TVEI to all schools and colleges, the MSC considered that other projects submitted were more relevant to the overall aim of the TVEI.

AIDS

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide extra funding to enable the Welsh region of the national blood transfusion service to acquire the facilities to process and store extra plasma for factor VIII; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Additional funds have already been made available to South Glamorgan Health Authority to enable the Welsh region of the national blood transfusion service to acquire additional facilities to harvest and store plasma for factor VIII production at the blood products laboratory, Elstree.

YTS

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take the appropriate steps to investigate the financial operation of the YTS scheme administered by the Development Board for Rural Wales; why the scheme is to be transferred to the Mid Wales Training Unit; and if he will arrange for an independent audit into the scheme covering the period 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Women

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General (1) what courses are available for attracting women science and technology graduates who wish to re-enter *(a)* the labour market and *(b)* the teaching profession;

(2) what courses or classes are available under the umbrella of his Department for women who wish to re-enter *(a)* the labour market and *(b)* the teaching profession.

Mr. Trippier: All Manpower Services Commission training schemes are open to women. In addition, the MSC runs a number of schemes under its wider opportunities training programme designed specifically to help women returning to the labour market. None of these courses cater specifically for science and technology graduates. The MSC also provides business for women to take an Open University course "Women into Technology", which is designed to help women enter or re-enter industry as technicians. Training courses designed to help women re-enter the teaching profession are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what steps the Manpower Services Commission takes to ensure that all companies in receipt of funds from it have complied with company law in respect of accounting and financial records.

Mr. Trippier: All limited liability companies with which the Manpower Services Commission has contracts are required to comply with company law in the same way as all other limited liability companies.

The companies are subject to external audit, and external auditors have a responsibility to advise companies on compliance with company law. The audited accounts, together with information required on the annual return, must be filed with the Registrar of Companies.

If, during the course of approval and monitoring work, staff of the Manpower Services Commission become aware of any failure to comply with company law, the facts will be pointed out to the company. The company will be advised to take the necessary steps to put matters right.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will bring up to date the labour force figures given in his reply dated 28 April 1986, *Official Report*, columns *335-37*; and if he will add a table for the same years covering manufacturing.

Mr. Lee: The available information from the regular quarterly employees in employment series is presented in tables 1 and 2.

The available information from the "Labour Force Survey" is presented in table 3 below.

Table 1
Employees in Employment in Great Britain

Thousand

June	*Males Full-time*	*Males Part-time*	*Males All*	*Females Full-time*	*Females Part-time*
1971	12,840	584	13,424	5,468	2,757
1972	12,719	600	13,319	5,454	2,877
1973	12,813	665	13,478	5,442	3,163
1974	12,675	689	13,363	5,512	3,421
1975	12,542	697	13,240	5,422	3,551
1976	12,398	699	13,097	5,366	3,585
1977	12,395	681	13,076	5,433	3,617
1978	12,396	705	13,100	5,486	3,688
1979	—	—	13,183	5,585	3,870
1980	—	—	13,018	5,500	3,941
1981	—	—	12,278	5,290	3,817
1982	—	—	11,930	5,202	3,783
1983	—	—	11,670	5,125	3,776
1984	—	—	11,619	5,234	3,889
1985	10,869	822	11,691	5,301	4,012
1986	10,789	852	11,641	5,315	4,136

Note: In this table a part-time employee is defined as one who normally works for 30 hours or less. The full-time, part-time split for males is available only at dates for which a census of employment was conducted and post-September 1984.

Table 2
Employees in Employment in Manufacturing Industries—Great Britain

Thousand

June	*Males Full-time*	*Males Part-time*	*Males All*	*Females Full-time*	*Females Part-time*
1971	5,469	73	5,542	1,870	478
1972	5,289	69	5,358	1,802	461
1973	5,283	78	5,361	1,795	518
1974	5,271	86	5,357	1,770	596
1975	5,087	81	5,168	1,650	534
1976	4,962	79	5,041	1,582	496
1977	4,980	78	5,058	1,615	499
1978	4,955	85	5,040	1,608	491
1979	—	—	5,001	1,617	490
1980	—	—	4,805	1,532	464
1981	—	—	4,344	1,345	409
1982	—	—	4,103	1,276	373
1983	—	—	3,862	1,220	336
1984	—	—	3,751	1,225	326
1985	3,663	54	3,717	1,230	322
1986	3,578	52	3,630	1,220	312

Note: The full-time, part-time split for males is available only at dates for which a census of employment was conducted and post-September 1984.

Table 3
Labour force survey data on employees[1] in Great Britain

Thousands

	Males				*Females*			
	Aged 16 to 19		*Aged 20+*		*Aged 16 to 19*		*Aged 20+*	
	All industries	*Manufacturing industries*	*All industries*	*Manufacturing industries*	*All industries*	*Manufacturing industries*	*All industries*	*Manufacturing industries*
1979								
Full-time[2]	1,002	381	11,902	4,825	838	275	4,496	1,326
Part-time[2]	41	*	235	58	75	*	3,631	611
All employees[3]	1,044	383	12,137	4,883	913	280	8,127	1,937
1981								
Full-time[2]	840	280	10,798	4,002	727	185	4,381	1,194
Part-time[2]	122	*	287	74	181	*	3,594	480
All employees[3]	975	289	11,237	4,135	917	195	8,058	1,695
1983[4]								
Full-time[2]	701	227	10,489	3,654	584	142	4,335	1,007
Part-time[2]	110	*	245	45	198	*	3,390	361
All employees[3]	815	231	10,755	3,706	788	151	7,878	1,386
1984[4]								
Full-time[2]	677	236	10,413	3,587	580	148	4,377	1,043
Part-time[2]	154	12	272	46	231	11	3,715	376
All employees[3]	831	249	10,693	3,635	812	160	8,096	1,420
1985[4]								
Full-time[2]	654	237	10,479	3,614	576	159	4,440	1,031
Part-time[2]	159	11	278	47	252	*	3,787	393
All employees[3]	813	248	10,760	3,661	828	167	8,229	1,424

	Males				Females			
	Aged 16 to 19		Aged 20+		Aged 16 to 19		Aged 20+	
	All industries	Manufacturing industries	All industries	Manufacturing industries	All industries	Manufacturing industries	All industries	Manufacturing industries
1986[5]								
Full-time[2]	645	243	10,389	3,630	549	155	4,521	1,027
Part-time[2]	168	12	282	42	265	12	3,873	379
All employees[3]	814	255	10,678	3,672	816	167	8,398	1,406

[4] The labour force survey estimates relate to the spring of each year. Figures for 1979 and 1981, but not later years, include those on Government employment and training schemes if reported as in employment as an employee.
[2] In this table an employee is shown as full or part-time according to whether he/she considers his/her job to be a full or part-time job.
[3] Includes those who did not state whether their job was full or part-time.
[4] The estimates for these years differ slightly from those in the previous reply, because of improved estimating procedures for persons aged 16 to 19 and the exclusion of persons on Government employment and training schemes.
[5] Preliminary results.
[6] Less than ten thousand.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) when he expects to announce revised local unemployment rates based on the employment figures contained in the 1984 census of employment;

(2) if he will publish the revised national and regional unemployment rates for each month since June 1983, based on his updated employment figures contained in the 1984 census of employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General what was the percentage change in unemployment in Derbyshire, between January 1986 and January 1987, for those people without a job for more than three years.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. Comparison of unemployment between 9 January 1986 and 8 January 1987 is slightly affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986. The published numbers of claimants unemployed for over three years in Derbyshire on the two dates are 7,731 and 8,738 respectively.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures available for the number of people in work in Derbyshire; and how this compares with 1979.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information for country areas and covering both employees and the self-employed comes from the 1981 census of population and is contained in the "County Report for Derbyshire", part 1 ref: CEN 81 CR10, a copy of which is in the Library. No similar data are available for 1979.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Paymaster General if he will state the number of persons in full-time employment as at *(a)* June 1986 and *(b)* the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In June 1986 there were 16,105,000 full-time employees in employment in Great Britain. In September 1986 (the latest date for which estimates are available) the figure was 16,234,000. These figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Blair asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the total effect on the numbers on the unemployment register of those working in special employment and training measures, for each month from February 1986.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *36*]: For the latest estimate of the percentage effect of the employment measures on the unemployment count I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on 27 March 1987, at column *293*. The estimates provide no more than a very rough guide to the effect of such measures on the count and we do not, therefore, publish monthly count figures claiming to incorporate the effect.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will list, for each year of the age range 16 to 25, the number and proportion of those in school, work, further education, higher education, community programmes, or other specified scheme.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c. *152*]: The latest available estimates are set out in the following table. Figures are not available for 25-year-olds and those for 19 to 24 year olds are not available for each year of age separately.

Education and labour market status of 16 to 24-year-olds[1] in Great Britain
January 1985

	16-year-olds		17-year-olds		18-year-olds		19 to 20-year-olds		21 to 24-year-olds	
	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.
Total population	872	100	897	100	910	100	1,881	100	3,578	100
Full-time education	393	45	278	31	156	17	260	14	158	4
School[3]	269	31	167	19	22	2	3	..	..	..
Further education[4]	123	14	102	11	53	6	29	2	17	..

	16-year-olds		17-year-olds		18-year-olds		19 to 20-year-olds		21 to 24-year-olds	
	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.
Higher education[4]	1	..	8	1	82	9	228	12	141	4
YTS[5]	234	27	39	4	4	..	..	..	..	..
Claimant unemployed	108	12	150	17	180	20	[8]	—	[8]	—
Other[6]	137	16	430	48	570	63	[9]	—	[9]	—
of which										
Community Programme[7]	..	..	..	..	[10]	—	[10]	—	35	1
Young Workers Scheme[7]	..	..	63	7	..	..	..	..	..	..
Enterprise Allowance Scheme[7]	[11]	—	[11]	—	[11]	—	[11]	—	[11]	—
Community Industry[7]	[12]	—	[12]	—	3	..	1	..	..	..

January 1986[2]

	16-year-olds		17-year-olds		18-year-olds	
	Number (000s)	Per cent	Number (000s)	Per cent.	Number (000s)	Per cent.
Total population	860	100	870	100	895	100
Full-time education	390	45	273	31	156	17
School[3]	266	31	162	19	22	2
Further education[4]	123	14	104	12	53	6
Higher education[4]	1	..	8	1	80	9
YTS[5]	228	27	36	4	2	..
Claimant unemployed	101	12	140	16	164	18
Other[6]	142	17	420	48	573	64
of which						
Community Programme[7]	..	..	..	..	[10]	—
Young Workers Scheme[7]	..	..	57	7	..	..
Enterprise Allowance Scheme[7]	[11]	—	[11]	—	[11]	—
Community Industry[7]	[12]	—	[12]	—	3	..

Source: DE, MSC, DES estimates

[1] Ages as at 31 August of preceding year (see also footnote[7]). Estimates are not available for 25-year-olds, or for single years of age above 18.

[2] Provisional estimates are not yet available for age groups above 18.

[3] Pupils attending maintained, independent and special schools are included.

[4] Full-time and sandwich, excluding private further education. Excludes those aged 16-18 on YTS within colleges.

[5] Includes those (aged 16-18), in further education establishments attending YTS courses.

[6] Mainly those in employment outside YTS. Includes those neither employed nor seeking work, (for example because of domestic responsibilities), and those seeking work but not claiming benefit. Excludes those holding a contract of employment under YTS.

[7] Age breakdown based on profile of entrants. The schemes shown in the table are the only ones current at the dates specified which cover persons in the relevant age groups.

.. Under 500 or ½ per cent.

[8] Estimate not available for age group shown: estimate for 19 to 24-year-olds is 831,000 (15 per cent. of the population).

[9] Estimate not available for age group shown: estimate for 19 to 24-year-olds is 4,210,000 (77 per cent. of the population).

[10] Estimate not available for age group shown: estimates for 18 to 20-year-olds are 44,000 at January 1985 and 69,000 at January 1986.

[11] Estimate not available for age group shown: estimates for 18 to 24-year-olds are 9,000 at January 1985 and 13,000 at January 1986.

[12] Estimate not available for age group shown: estimates for 16 to 17-year-olds are 3,000 at both January 1985 and January 1986.

Note on rounding:

Numbers are shown to the nearest 1,000 but cannot in all cases be regarded as accurate to that degree. The estimates involve a range of data sources and adjustments and rounding to the nearest 5,000 may therefore, be more appropriate, particularly for the residual other category (see footnote [6]).

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give the number of people over 18 years who receive training allowances through the Manpower Services Commission to support them in their training; and how this figure compares with each of the last eight years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c. *156*]: The figures give the information requested. These are of course not the numbers of people being trained with Government support, but only the numbers who receive an income by way of allowance when being trained.

	Number
1985-86	84,000
1984-85	92,000
1983-84	102,000
1982-83	73,000
1981-82	71,000
1980-81	83,000
1979-80	91,000
1978-79	70,000

Final figures for 1986-87 are not yet available. Figures for years before 1978-79 were not recorded on a comparable basis.

Workfare

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the terms of reference of the study being carried out by the University of Buckingham into workfare.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This independent study is being carried out by the employment research centre of the University of Buckingham, which describes it as a feasibility study of a community workfare system in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will place in the Library all working papers available from the study into workfare now being completed by the University of Buckingham.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The study of workfare is being carried out by the employment research centre of the University of Buckingham, which is responsible for publishing its conclusions.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what information has been accumulated by his Department on the workings of the various United States of America unemployment benefit systems and of workfare; and from what sources.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We continually gather information from a wide variety of sources on all aspects of employment policy in other countries, including the United States. Sources include published articles and academic research and visits by Ministers and officials.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards workfare schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans to introduce a workfare scheme. Our policy is to help the long-term unemployed to get back into work through restart and the programmes to which it is a gateway.

USA (Visits)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list all visits to the United States of America by Ministers or civil servants in his Department since June 1983; and if he will explain the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Visits by Ministers in their departmental capacity to the United States from June 1983 to date were as follows. We do not hold records centrally of visits by officials only.

Ministerial Visits

Dates	*Minister/accompanying official(s)*	*Purpose of visit*
1 October to 7 October 1983	Mr. Morrison, with two officials	To see and discuss United States schemes for the unemployed
15 November to 20 November 1985	Lord Young, with one official	To visit major trade promotion events and United States programmes on inner cities problems
30 March to 7 April 1986	Paymaster General, with one official	To see and discuss inner cities problems and urban regeneration project
13 July to 15 July 1986	Mr. Lang, with two officials	To see employment programmes in Massachusetts
5 March to 11 March 1987	Lord Young, with three officials	To discuss United Kingdom inward investment, enterprise and deregulation

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his answer of 2 April, *Official Report*, column 559, if he will list the changes in the conditions for claiming unemployment benefits that have been or are the subject of review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All the conditions governing the receipt of unemployment benefit are kept under review as a matter of normal course.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Paymaster General whether he will amend the regulations for awarding grants under the enterprise allowance scheme so as to place those under the age of 50 years on the same footing as those over 50 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The specific purpose of the enterprise allowance scheme is to provide an incentive for unemployed people in receipt of unemployment and supplementary benefit who would otherwise be deterred from going ahead with their business plans because they would lose their entitlement to benefit. People under 50 and those 50 and over are on essentially the same footing. However, in the case of redundant mineworkers, those 50 or over receive under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme a benefit known as "unemployment benefit equivalent", which is accepted as a qualifying benefit for the enterprise allowance scheme. Redundant mineworkers under 50 do not secure "unemployment benefit equivalent" but will qualify for the enterprise allowance scheme so long as they are in receipt of unemployment or supplementary benefit. I have no plans to amend the rules of the enterprise allowance scheme as the hon. Member suggests.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his policy to allow those who are unemployed and have savings above £3,000 as a result of redundancy payments to qualify for the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The enterprise allowance scheme is specifically designed to provide an incentive for unemployed people in receipt of unemployment or supplementary benefit who would otherwise be deterred from going ahead with their business plans because they would lose their entitlement to benefit. People in receipt of unemployment benefit, whatever their savings, will be eligible for the scheme. However, people with over £3,000 in savings from whatever source who have exhausted their entitlement to unemployment benefit are not normally eligible for supplementary benefit and are therefore ineligible to join the enterprise allowance scheme.

Training Measures (Bury)

Mr. Burt asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of people benefiting from special employment and training measures at the latest available date in the constituency of Bury, North; and what is the average cost per person under each.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give a precise total figure for the number of people on employment, enterprise and training measures in the constituency of Bury, North, because of the various bases on which local information is collated. Figures for the constituency of Bury, North are available only at disproportionate cost. The following table gives what information is available for the number of people on employment measures, and the first year net exchequer cost per person no longer unemployed.

Programme	*at*	*Numbers Helped*	*Area*	*First Year Direct Exchequer.[1] Cost per person no longer unemployed 1987-88 (forecast)*
Community Programme	27 February	420	Bury Metropolitan Borough Area	2,050
Voluntary Projects Programme	31 March	77	Bury North Constituency	[2]
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	7 April	795	Greater Manchester (North) Area	1,800
New Workers Scheme	31 March	1,035	Greater Manchester (North) Area	1,300
Job Release Scheme	31 March	82	Bury Area	1,900

[1] These figures are for the schemes nationally and are published in the public expenditure White Paper.
[2] VPP participants are not normally removed from the unemployment register.

In addition, in the area including Bury, Prestwich and Radcliffe up to 31 March 1987, 1,035 people started YTS training and in Bury, 562 people started adult training courses. The gross cost per filled place for YTS in 1986-87 is estimated to be £2,600. Similar information for adult training is not available.

Tourism

Mr. Sumberg asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the performance of tourism in 1986 and prospects for the coming year.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have today published a leaflet entitled "A bumper year for tourism", which provides information on tourism performance in 1986. This shows that there was strong growth in domestic tourism spending with overseas tourism earnings equalling the record £5·5 billion spent in 1985. On the basis of recovery in the numbers of overseas visitors in the last quarter of 1986 and the high level of forward bookings, prospects for 1987 look good.

Research and Development

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General what is his Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88; and what are the main areas of research selected by his Department under the Rothschild principles of the customer-contractor relationship.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c.*154*]: My Department's planned expenditure on research and development for 1987-88 is shown in table A and that of the Manpower Services Commission in table B.

All research and development work conducted by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission is designed to assist with the achievement of the publicly stated objectives of the Department of Employment group.

Table A
DE's Planned Expenditure on Research and Development in 1987-88

	£000s
External research	
Labour Market Studies	360
Groups in the Labour Market	165
Employment Measures	103
Careers Service/Youth Employment	198
Industrial Relations/Pay and Incomes	89
Small Firms and Tourism	234
Enterprise and Deregulation	101
	1,250
Internal costs	
Cost of managing external work and conducting some internal work	553
Development	
Work to enhance the effectiveness of ED Group Programmes	550
	2,353

Table B
MSC's Planned Expenditure on Research and Development in 1987-88

	£000s
Enterprise and Job Creation	2,555
Labour Market Efficiency	1,154
Employment Measures	547
Youth Training Scheme	9,547
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative	439
Adult and Occupational Training	8,723
Labour Market Research	264
TOTAL	23,229

ENVIRONMENT

London Docklands Development Corporation (Site Sales)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a list of sites sold by the London Docklands Development Corporation since 1981,

itemising how much each was sold for, and the amount of London Docklands Development Corporation funds spent on site work, reclamation and infrastructure.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide a list of sites sold by the London Docklands Development Corporation since 1981, itemising the price at which the sale was made, and the amount of London Docklands Development Corporation funds spent on site works, reclamation and infrastructure.

Mr. John Patten: Appropriate information is being collated by the LDDC. I will write to the hon. Members when it is available.

London Docklands

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many firms have moved out of the Docklands urban development area or have closed down since July 1981; and how many people were employed in those firms.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 6 April 1987, at column *26*.

Sports Facilities

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the principal grants made towards sports facilities in each of the counties of Cleveland, Durham, Northumbria and Tyne and Wear since 1979.

Mr. Tracey: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Accommodation Agencies

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many accommodation agencies have continued to trade after successful prosecution; and how many directors of accommodation agencies have continued to trade after a successful prosecution.

Mr. Tracey: We have no evidence that accommodation agencies or their directors have continued to trade after having been successfully prosecuted.

Local Authorities (Overtime Payments)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to restrict the amount of overtime payments which may be earned by local authority employees to no more than 50 per cent. of their basic remuneration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government have no plans to introduce such legislation.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the central Government rate support grant per head of population for 1986-87 and 1987-88 for *(a)* Northamptonshire, *(b)* Derbyshire, *(c)* Leicestershire, *(d)* Bedfordshire, and *(e)* Cambridgeshire.

Mr. Chope: The figures requested are as follows:

	1986-87 RSG £p/h	*1987-88 RSG £p/h*
Northamptonshire	145·2	133·8
Derbyshire	123·3	133·4
Leicestershire	150·7	143·5
Bedfordshire	90·4	58·2
Cambridgeshire	105·1	91·1

Rate support comprises block grant and domestic rate relief grant. Counties do not receive domestic rate relief grant.

The figures for 1986-87 are authorities' entitlements based on budgeted expenditure information at first supplementary report.

The figures for 1987-88 are authorities' initial entitlements to grant based on expenditure figures returned on form BG78, modified if necessary to include an estimate of the cost of the teachers' pay settlement.

River Pollution

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards control of river pollution in the light of the recent research results published by Greenpeace, a copy of which has been sent to him, showing that 35·5 per cent. of all the flounders examined in the inner region of the Thames were diseased or abnormal in their appearance.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am aware of this report which was released at the time of the recent Water Research Centre conference on the North sea. However, I do not see the results of this study as having any direct implications for my Department's general policy on the control of river pollution, which is to restore and maintain the wholesomeness of our rivers. To this end, we rely on part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which provides a comprehensive system of controls covering all significant waters. In addition, the Government have put forward a number of detailed proposals to strengthen these controls in the context of our privatisation proposals, and these are actively being considered.

The setting up last week of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution with a specific water pollution inspector capability, will considerably strengthen the Department's role in the enforcement of controls which in turn should lead to further improvements in water quality.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the interim results of the survey of the quality of bathing waters he announced on 3 December 1985; and if, in the light of these results, he is satisfied with the quality of the United Kingdom's bathing waters.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those of the 1,500 sites investigated for the storage of low or intermediate level nuclear waste that were in the constituency of Leyton or in adjoining constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any site in south Yorkshire has been included in a list of possibly suitable sites for the disposal of low level or intermediate level radioactive waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Members to the answers I gave on 6 April at column *29*, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard).

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Ridley: The approach embodied in the FMI is changing working assumptions throughout my Department. Results are reported annually to the House in the public expenditure White Paper (currently, Cmnd. 56) as well as in such reports as the White Papers on the FMI and the annual reports by major sponsored bodies.

The range of systems reflecting this approach include:

The MINIS top management system which reviews the progress against objectives and the future targets of all parts of the Department.

Line management systems (LMS) in all parts of the Department, giving positive reporting on delegated responsibilities.

An organisation for financial management (OFM) system of delegations identifying responsibilities in the policy line for financial management of each public expenditure sub-programme and vote sub-head. This system is being extended to running costs. Six hundred officials have been trained in financial management.

Devolved budgeting and monitoring throughout the Department for an increasing range of running costs. This system has recently been simplified, and the scope for virement between budget centres improved.

In common with the rest of the Civil Service, annual staff reports now review progress against the personal objectives and work plans agreed at the start of the reporting period.

Similar systems are in operation in the Property Services Agency, adapted to suit the agency's roles of managing the civil and defence estates and providing the Government's accommodation services. The major changes over the last eight years have been the introduction on the civil estate of the property repayment services scheme which has transferred to the client the responsibility for funding most accommodation services and the introduction in the defence estate of local works maintenance budgets.

For the longer term, we shall shortly be getting the results of a study of improvements to the agency's accounting systems which I hope will lead to a more commercial approach to its operations and an ability to compare PSA services directly with those provided by the private sector.

Effective corporate planning processes link the Department to all its major sponsored bodies. These focus on ministerial objectives, progress towards them and cost-effectiveness.

Outside the Department, the independent Audit Commission for local authorities is spreading the many lessons that can be learnt from the best of local authority financial management.

Since 1979, manpower has fallen by 35 per cent. in the Property Services Agency, including the Crown Suppliers. Other departmental staff have been reduced by 42 per cent., 2,500 of the savings being due to improved efficiency. Productivity is still rising.

Defective Housing

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the beacon rents for defective houses in the Yorkshire and east midlands registration areas;

(2) how many houses which are identified within the Housing Defects Act 1984 have been registered for fair rents.

Mr. Tracey: Information on registered rents does not show whether the properties concerned have been designed under the Housing Defects Act 1984 (now Housing Act 1985), and there is not beacon rent specifically for defective houses. Beacon rents are assessed only for four standard property types. The July 1986 beacon rents for modernised 1930s three bedroom semi-detached houses, which may be of a broadly similar size to some of the common types of defective houses, range from £20·75 to £26·73 per week in Yorkshire, and from £20·75 to £23·75 in the east midlands.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the recommendation by the Building Research Establishment that defective houses should be examined at least every five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Building Research Establishment has recommended that designated unrepaired PRC properties first be inspected and tested as necessary, and then, in the light of that assessment, re-inspected periodically (not necessarily at five-year intervals). We have received no recent representations on this advice.

Falkland Islands (Equipment Sale)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was realised at the sale in Liverpool on 7 April of equipment from the Falkland Islands; to what use the proceeds of that sale will be put; what proportion of the equipment has been re-exported as a result of the sale; and on what basis the port of Liverpool was selected as the agents for this auction.

Mr. Chope: The sale in Liverpool on 7 April was privately organised and the Department was not involved. At the end of the Mount Pleasant airport contract Laing Mowlem ARC Joint Venture, the main contractor, sold its surplus plant and equipment to a company which arranged and paid for its transportation to the United Kingdom. The purchaser arranged the sale at Liverpool (through a firm of auctioneers) and the proceeds belong to him.

Derbyshire (Expenditure)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) by how much gross county council

expenditure has risen in Derbyshire, in real terms, between *(a)* 1980-81 and *(b)* 1981-82 and the latest date for which figures are available; and how these figures compare with the average gross county council expenditure rises over the same period of time;

(2) by how much current county council expenditure has risen in Derbyshire, in real terms, between *(a)* 1980-81 and *(b)* 1981-82 and the latest date for which figures are available; and how these figures compare with the average current county council expenditure rises over the same period of time.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Local Authority Services (Tendering)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on which activities he proposes to exclude from his forthcoming legislation requiring tendering for local authority services.

Dr. Boyson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 2 February at column *491*. Application of the legislation in Scotland will, of course, be the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Playboard

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what initiatives his Department has taken since the inception of Playboard to promote and develop its responsibilities;

(2) what alternatives he considered for the future of Playboard prior to September 1986; and why he rejected them;

(3) if he will make a statement about the representations he received from organisations interested in the future of Playboard.

Mr. Tracey: Playboard itself was set up to pursue initiatives for children's play through funding from this Department. since 1983 the Department's contribution has amounted to £2·4 million. In addition, the Department has maintained support for children's play through the urban programme (over £6 million each year). since 1983, the Department of Health and Social Security has spent £6·5 million on initiatives for the Under-fives while maintaining its financial support, with the Department of Education and Science, for other voluntary organisations concerned with children's play.

Apart from the preferred option of merging Playboard's role and functions with the Sports Council's, a number of other options were considered, including maintaining support for Playboard, ceasing support altogether, and transferring the resources to the urban programme. The representations I have received from interested organisations about the "merger" primarily have been concerned with two issues: the case for the independence of play from sport, and with the scale of future funding.

I understand those concerns, but do not believe that the merger proposal preclude a separate identity for children's play. Nor does it affect in any way the support for play through the urban programme or from other Departments. Following Playboard's decision to go into liquidation, I am pursuing urgently with the Sports Council how best early arrangements can be put into place for achieving greater benefits for children's play in a more cost-effective way.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in each borough in London in March 1987; and what are the equivalent figures for 1986 and 1985 respectively.

Mr. Tracey: The statistical publication "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England—Results for the fourth quarter 1986", which is to be published on 10 April, will include in table 7 the numbers, reported to this Department by the boroughs, of the households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the end of December: a copy will be placed in the Library.

Figures for December 1984 and December 1985 appear in corresponding publications for the second half of 1984 and the fourth quarter of 1985, respectively: these are available in the Library. Since publication of those reports, the following late returns have been received:

Brent—677 December 1984
Lambeth—98 December 1984 and 173 December 1985
Merton—7 December 1985

In addition, the number at December 1985 for Haringey has been revised to 195.

Homeless Families

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why guidelines are issued to housing authorities on the acceptance of homeless families who were from overseas;

(2) what representations he has received concerning Bangladeshi families in bed and breakfast accommodation in London;

(3) what advice his Department has issued to the London borough of Tower Hamlets concerning the application of the intentionally homeless rule under the Homeless Persons Act.

Mr. Tracey: Guidance to all local authorities on the exercise of their functions under part III of the Housing Act 1985 is contained in the Department's code of guidance (a copy of which is in the Library). Paragraphs 2.13-2.20 of that code are concerned with intentional homelessness, and paragraph A.2.2 is relevant to the treatment of people from overseas. Section 71(1) of the 1985 Act requires local authorities to have regard to the guidance in the code. Recent representations about the housing of Bangladeshi families in bed and breakfast accommodation have been from the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Westminster.

Smaller Building Contracts

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a interim report on the progress made by the working party which he has established to review the carrying out by the building industry of smaller building contracts, including the effects of competition from the black economy.

Mr. John Patten: The working party have met twice. At its next meetings it will be considering the scope for industry-wide warranty/guarantee schemes and the marketing of firms trading legitimately.

Stockbridge Village Trust

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the financial position of the Stockbridge village trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Stockbridge Village Trust was set up in 1983, with the full agreement of residents, to take over and refurbish what had been one of the most rundown local authority estates in the country. Using a mixture of public and private finance, the trust embarked on a unique redevelopment programme involving the repair and remodelling of the bulk of the existing tenanted housing and selling vacant plots of land for new housing, both for sale and for rent.

By September 1985 the trust had made substantial progress with this physical programme and, equally importantly, the trust had gained its tenants' confidence as a responsible and efficient landlord. In contrast to pre-trust days when over 10 per cent. of the estate had been vacant, the estate was now fully occupied with a waiting list of some 300 applicants.

Experience suggested that some of the initial assumptions and financial projections needed revision. We therefore appointed the consultants Ernst and Whinney to carry out a comprehensive appraisal of the trust's position and long-term prospects. It reported that the trust was managing the estate efficiently and carrying out its capital programme effectively, but it recommended some restructuring in the interests of long-term financial stability.

My Department discussed a package of measures, with the trust and its backers — Abbey National building society, Barclays Bank and Knowsley MBC, and I can now announce that full agreement has been reached by all the parties. These measures will enable the trust to complete its redevelopment of the estate. To complement them, there will be a continuing programme of new building for private sale, including sale on shared ownership terms. The Stockbridge Village housing association's programme of new build for fair rent is now largely complete. The metropolitan district of Knowsley will, with urban programme support, demolish the three Denes tower blocks in the centre of the estate and build a major leisure facility in their place.

I am pleased that all parties have reaffirmed their commitment to this trail-blazing initiative. The trust has already achieved a great deal, in refurbishing large areas of the estate, in building a new shopping centre, and in creating confidence in an area where around 200 residents have now bought their homes under the right to buy, and over 120 new homes have been built for owner-occupation. I look forward to the trust completing its programme successfully.

Eldon Hill (Quarrying)

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in the light of his recent decision to refuse to allow an extension of quarrying at Eldon Hill in the Peak District, he will make a statement on his policy on working and winning of minerals in national parks.

Mr. Waldegrave: All applications for development whether inside or outside national parks must be considered on their own merits. However, it is also the Secretary of State's policy as expressed in DOE Circular 4/76 that, because of the serious impact mineral working may have on the natural beauty of the parks, applications for the extraction of minerals in national parks must be subject to the most rigorous examination. In his view extraction should be demonstrated to be in the public interest, and consideration of such applications should therefore normally include an assessment of:

(i) the need for the development, including the extraction of the mineral, in terms of national considerations and the impact of permitting or refusing it upon the local economy;

(ii) the availability and cost of alternative sources of supply;

(iii) any detrimental effect on the environment and the landscape and the extent to which that could and should be moderated;

(iv) whether in the light of this assessment the proposed development would be justified in the public interest.

Local authorities should have regard to this policy in the preparation of, and alterations to, their development plans.

Zoological Society

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will announce details of further financial support to the Zoological Society of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to say that the Government and the Zoological Society of London have agreed on both the level of funding for 1987-88 and the mounting of a radical study of the options for the future management and funding of London zoo and Whipsnade park. My right hon. Friend therefore intends to grant to ZSL £2 million in 1987-88 as revenue support plus a sum of up to £150,000 to match money raised by ZSL from private sources in 1986-87.

In addition ZSL has agreed that before the end of 1987-88 it will see whether there is a basis for submitting firm proposals for attracting new capital. In order to assist it, ZSL will, jointly with DOE, commission a firm of consultants to investigate the options. The study, which will be part paid for by the Government, will have the following terms of reference:

(i) To advise on the kinds of zoos which ZSL might appropriately develop for future visitors.

(ii) To identify the scope for introducing private capital into the zoo operation, in association with measures to increase revenue from visitors.

(iii) To draw up a prospectus which can be used by ZSL as a basis for attracting potential investors.

We shall consider the need for any further Government support for ZSL in the light of the outcome of the study and ZSL's own proposals.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Sir John Wells asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the Government's views on the reviews of the financial guidelines for management agreements under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: A study of the operation of the financial guidelines was carried out by consultants in 1985. We have carefully studied their report and concluded that the basis of the present system is sound and that the guidelines do not require major amendment. However, we do propose to accept a number of the consultants' recommendations for improvements to the guidelines to assist conservation authorities in securing value for money. A consultation paper is being issued today explaining our proposals in detail and seeking the views of interested parties. A copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

European Year of the Environment

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what his Department is contributing to the European Year of the Environment.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1987, c. *518*]: Application forms will be available shortly for the funds available to grant aid projects within the EYE programme, and my Department will pay grant as early as possible on schemes recommended by the UK EYE committee. Pending parliamentary approval of the main Supply Estimate urgent expenditure estimated at £150,000 will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farmers (Income)

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average income of a cereal farmer in each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The estimated average net farm income of specialist cereal farms in England and Scotland during each of the last five years for which data are available is as follows:

Year	*Average net farm income of specialist cereal farms (£'000 per farm)*
1981-82	9·7
1982-83	16·1
1983-84	16·5
1984-85	19·8
1985-86	2·3

Source: The Farm Business Survey in England and Scotland
Note: Figures given are the latest obtained from the Survey for the year in question.

Hill Sheep Farming

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the Commission of the European Communities since 1 January concerning the state of hill sheep farming in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The sheep sector generally is prospering under the regime we negotiated in 1980. Production has expanded: market prices are rising seasonally and producers are receiving the benefit of the variable premium. Sheep producers in the hills have benefited in recent months from the HLCA payments and from the special 75 per cent. advance payments of sheep annual premium. The European Commission has proposed that the annul premium should be limited to the first 1,000 sheep in any flock in the less-favoured areas, a proposal which we resisted successfully last year and which we have continued to resist this year.

Dairy Farms

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the Commission of the European Communities since 1 January concerning the state of smaller dairy farms in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: In my approach to discussion of milk issues in the Community since 1 January I have aimed to take account of the interests of all sectors of the United Kingdom dairy industry.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals for a review of milk quota leasing arrangements for tenant farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The European Commission has expressed serious doubts about the legality of our quota leasing arrangements. I am trying hard to change its mind on this and I am in direct communication with the Commission on the problem.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what literage of milk quota was transferred in the financial year 1986-87 by *(a)* sale and *(b)* leasing in England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: For the milk quota year 1986-87 the provisional total volume of quota sold or leased with land was 430 million litres. 199 million litres was temporarily reallocated through the short term leasing scheme operated by the MMB.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to put the leasing system for milk quotas back into operation.

Mr. Jopling: The European Commission has expressed serious doubts about the legality of our quita leasing arrangements. I am trying hard to change its mind on this and am in direct communication with the Commission on the problem.

Poultry Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement as to the present state and future prospects of the poultry rearing industry.

Mr. Jopling: Demand for poultrymeat has been expanding rapidly and prices have remained strong. Egg consumption has shown a long-term decline; egg prices were weak last year due to over-supply but have shown some strengthening recently. The future prospects of our poultry producers will depend essentially on their ability to match production to the needs of the market-place.

Wine Production

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make it his policy to resist any attempts to impose rectified concentrated grape must in the production of English wine until such time as enrichment is necessary and permitted;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that only English-produced sugar and not rectified concentrated grape must from Italy is permitted to be added to the fermentation process of English wine until such time as enrichment is necessary or permitted;

(3) if he will consider making grants available for the establishment of English vineyards for *(a)* the purchase of vines, *(b)* their support, *(c)* trellissing, *(d)* wiring and *(e)* windbreaks;

(4) what grants are currently available for the establishment of English vineyards and ancillary purposes in the light of his alternative land use policy;

(5) what is his policy regarding the manifestation of phylloxera in English vineyards;

(6) if he will abandon his policy of attempted eradication of phylloxera in English vineyards.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Quick Frozen Food

Mr. Craigen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the cost implications of the European Community's proposal on quick frozen food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We consider that this directive will impose unjustifiable costs on businesses, and retailers in particular, if adopted in its present form. For this reason the United Kingdom has repeatedly asked the EC Commission for a cost-benefit analysis of their proposals but none has been forthcoming to date. We will continue to seek modification to the proposals to make them more acceptable to the United Kingdom.

Agricultural Houses

Mr. Richard Page asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has completed consultations on charging for non-statutory advice to local planning authorities for appraisals relating to agricultural dwelling houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Following consultations with interested parties my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have decided to proceed with our proposals to charge for this service with effect from 1 May 1987. A charge of £28 per hour plus VAT will apply to advice by MAFF and WOAD on applications for the building of agricultural dwelling houses and for the lifting of agricultural occupancy conditions on existing houses. However, it is envisaged that in future such advice will only be sought in the more complex cases. The majority of cases will be capable of determination by the local planning authorities with whom responsibility rests.

No charges are to be introduced for statutory advice on planning applications for agricultural development and the new charges are not expected to affect planning decisions or planning policy.

SCOTLAND

Rates

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to compensate the churches in Scotland for the loss, with the introduction of the community charge, of the exemption from rates of domestic premises occupied by ministers of religion or priests under section 4 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions etc.) (Scotland) Act 1962; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Rifkind: I have no such plans. As an essential element of our proposals to replace domestic rates, all adults aged 18 or over will be required to pay a personal community charge and this will, of course, apply to ministers of religion and their families.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the value of the exemption from rates for domestic premises occupied by ministers of religion or priests under section 4 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions etc.) (Scotland) Act 1962 to churches in Scotland together with the number of properties benefitting from this for the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will give any breakdown on the basis of the value of the exemption or number of premises exempted for the Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic Church and other denominations, respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on the value of rates exemptions under section 4 of the 1962 Act is not held centrally.

Interpreters for the Deaf

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give for each of the last five years the total grant paid by central Government under section 9 and section 10, respectively, of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or under any other heading to the Scottish Association of Interpreters for the Deaf;

(2) how many qualified interpreters for the deaf there are in Scotland; and how many of these hold the certificate in communication with the deaf as a result of attendance at the courses run at Moray House college of Education.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the rights of prisoners serving long-term sentences in Scottish prisons in terms of visits from family and friends.

Mr. Rifkind: The Prisons (Scotland) Standing Orders specify a minimum visit entitlement of two 30-miniute visits every calendar month for sentenced prisoners. Up to three visitors may be present at any one visit. Long-term prisoners may also be transferred to a more convenient prison temporarily in order to receive accumulated visits.

Details of these entitlements are set out in Standing Order M. The minimum entitlement to visits was increased to the current level in 1984. Copies of Standing Order M are available to inmates in all penal establishments.

The frequency and length of visits may exceed the minimum entitlement where facilities and demand for visits at a particular establishment permit.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the rules governing the issue of passes to families and friends of prisoners to allow visits to be made; and if, in particular, he will explain who is entitled to such a pass, what expenses are covered and how often one individual applicant can obtain such a pass.

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind: The family and friends of a convicted prisoner require visiting orders in order to be admitted to a penal establishment to make a visit. Each visiting order may admit up to three people.

Financial assistance for fares and, where necessary, the cost of overnight accommodation and meals, for visits to prisoners may be provided under the prisons assisted visits scheme. The scheme is administered in Scotland by local social security offices on behalf of the Scottish Home and Health Department. Spouses and other close relatives may be granted assistance for up to 13 visits each year, provided they are receiving supplementary benefit (or, otherwise are in receipt of low income and not in full-time work), and wish to visit a convicted prisoner who is serving a sentence of more than three months or an unconvicted prisoner who has been in custody four weeks or longer. (The same prisons assisted visits scheme operates in England and Wales.)

Licensing Boards

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether guidance is given by his Department to chairmen and members of licensing boards in Scotland to assist them in the performance of their duties.

Mr. Lang: While the Scottish Home and Health Department has offered guidance to licensing boards on the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976, under that Act it is for each board to determine how its provisions should be applied within its area.

School Books

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent by each local education authority in Scotland on the purchase of text books in each year since 1978-79 in terms of *(a)* current prices and *(b)* 1978-79 prices.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which authorities or bodies made representations to him prior to the award of his authorisation to Babcock-Thorn to dispose of radioactive waste at Rosyth dockyard.

Mr. Ancram: The following local authorities and public bodies responded to consultation:

Fife Regional Council
Fife Health Board
Dunfermline District Council
Forth River Purification Board
Lothian Regional Council

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which bodies were invited to make representations about the award of the nuclear site licence to Babcock-Thorn.

Mr. Lang: Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate sought the views of the Ministry of Defence, the Industry Department for Scotland, the Scottish Development Department and Babcock-Thorn.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what occasions since 1974 nuclear site licences have been awarded without any consultative process.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate that during the period in question no licence has been awarded in respect of a new nuclear installation without consultation.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons were on the housing waiting list of each islands and district council in Scotland in May 1979, May 1983 and the most recent month for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: Reliable information on a consistent basis is not available centrally.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will tighten the requirements for competitive tendering for local authority road works in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has now considered the results of a survey of roads authorities in Scotland, and has decided to reduce from £50,000 to £25,000, with effect from 1 April 1988, the threshold above which all general roads works in Scotland must be put out to tender. Subject to the outcome of a further survey of the performance of Scottish roads authorities over the period 1986-87, regulations to make this change will be laid in due course. We are satisfied that this further measure of competition will help to secure better value for money expended by local authorities on roads work.

Suicides

Mr. McTaggert asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of suicides in Scotland under the age of 25 years for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Deaths from suicide of persons aged under 25, Scotland, 1981-85

	Number
1981	65
1982	59
1983	52
1984	55
1985	68

Population Statistics

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express by sex the percentage of the Scottish population in each socio-economic group.

Mr. Lang: The latest information available comes from the 1981 census of population and is as follows:

Percentage of economically active persons in each socio-economic group, by sex, Scotland, 1981

Socio-economic group		Percentages	
		Male	*Female*
1	Employers and managers in central and local government, industry, commerce, etc.—large establishments	5·7	2·4
2	Employers and managers in industry, commerce, etc.—small establishments	5·6	2·6
3	Professional workers—self-employed	0·8	0·1
4	Professional workers—employees	4·2	0·9
5.1	Ancillary workers and artists	6·1	14·4
5.2	Foremen and supervisors—non-manual	0·7	1·0
6	Junior non-manual workers	8·5	35·7
7	Personal service workers	1·4	13·4
8	Foremen and supervisors—manual	3·8	0·7
9	Skilled manual workers	29·2	4·2
10	Semi-skilled manual workers	14·0	10·0
11	Unskilled manual workers	7·3	8·1
12	Own account workers (other than professional)	3·1	1·0
13	Farmers—employers and managers	1·0	0·1
14	Farmers—own account	0·8	0·1
15	Agricultural workers	2·0	0·4
16	Members of armed forces	1·4	0·1
17	Inadequately described occupations	4·3	4·7

Source: 1981 census of population (10 per cent. sample).
Note: The sum of the percentages may not be 100 due to rounding.

Education (Statistics)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the sex and socio-economic background of the school-leaving population with one or more highers; and how this compares with 10 years ago.

Mr. John MacKay: The available information is set out in the table.

School leavers with one or more highers: by sex and by social class
Percentages

	1975-76	*1983-84*
(a) Sex		
Boys	50	46
Girls	50	54
Total	100	100
(b) Social Class (of father)		
I (Professional)	14	13
II (Intermediate)	29	33
IIIN (Skilled non-manual)	12	10
IIIM (Skilled manual)	28	25
IV (Partly skilled)	9	9
V (Unskilled)	1	2
Other and not known	6	9
Total[1]	100	100

[1] Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
Sources:
(a) Qualified school leaver returns.
(b) Scottish young people's survey.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express by sex the percentage of the post-16 years of age school population in each socio-economic group; and what were the equivalent figures for 10 years ago.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is not available.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on education in each of the past 10 years in cash and constant price terms.

Mr. John MacKay: Information is not available in the form requested.

Prisoners (Life Sentences)

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons sentenced to life imprisonment or detention during Her Majesty's pleasure are currently serving such sentences in Scotland; and how many were serving such sentences *(a)* 10, *(b)* 20 and *(c)* 30 years ago.

Mr. Lang: At 31 December 1986, 414 persons were serving sentences of life imprisonment or detention during Her Majesty's pleasure. The corresponding figure for 31 December 1977 was 341. No comparable figures are available for earlier dates.

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average length of sentence served by prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The time spent in custody by persons released on licence from life sentences is given in appendix D of the report of the Parole Board for Scotland 1985, of which a copy follows:

Appendix D
Time spent in custody by persons released from life sentences[1]

Year of release	*Years detained in custody*									
	6 to 7	*7 to 8*	*8 to 9*	*9 to 10*	*10 to 11*	*11 to 12*	*12 to 13*	*13 to 14*	*Over 14*	*Total*
1968	—	—	—	3	1	—	—	—	—	4
1969	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
1970	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	3
1971	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	3
1972	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	3
1973	—	1	1	1	2	—	—	—	1	6
1974	—	—	2	5	1	1	1	—	—	10
1975	—	1	4	6	3	1	—	—	—	15
1976	—	1	6	5	5	1	—	—	—	18
1977	—	—	2	4	5	1	1	1	1	15
1978	—	—	5	4	1	2	—	—	1	13
1979	1	1	2	5	6	2	2	1	1	21
1980	—	—	3	4	6	4	5	3	—	25
1981	—	1	7	20	4	4	4	1	—	41
1982	1	—	—	9	10	1	3	2	3	29

Year of release	Years detained in custody: 6 to 7	7 to 8	8 to 9	9 to 10	10 to 11	11 to 12	12 to 13	13 to 14	Over 14	Total
1983	2	3	4	14	11	2	—	—	2	38
1984	1	—	1	5	6	1	—	—	1	15
1985	1	1	5	4	6	4	1	—	1	23
TOTAL	7	9	45	92	70	25	17	8	11	284

[1] Includes HMP cases.

Health Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has from the general household survey of the percentage of the population in Scotland reporting chronic and acute sickness by social class or socio-economic group.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

The table shows the percentages reporting long-standing illness, limiting long-standing illness and restricted activity by age and socio-economic group, for Scotland. The data are taken from the 1985 general household survey.

By age and socio-economic group—All persons

Scotland 1985

Socio-economic group[1]	Age: 0-15	16-44	45-64	65 and over	Total
	(a) Percentage who reported long-standing illness				
Professional	8	12	(3)	(4)	13
Employers and Managers	11	15	31	38	21
Intermediate and junior non-manual	9	15	42	43	24
Skilled manual and own account non-professional	16	21	49	58	29
Semi-skilled manual and personal service	9	20	44	57	31
Unskilled manual	(2)	25	32	(26)	36
All persons	12	18	41	55	27
	(b) Percentage who reported limiting long-standing illness				
Professional	4	3	(1)	(3)	5
Employers and Managers	2	4	18	31	11
Intermediate and junior non-manual	5	5	28	32	14
Skilled manual and own account non-professional	7	9	33	45	18
Semi-skilled manual and personal service	1	12	34	41	21
Unskilled manual	(2)	18	28	(24)	31
All persons	5	8	28	43	16
	(c) Percentage who reported restricted activity				
Professional	17	17	(3)	(nil)	16
Employers and Managers	20	15	8	14	14
Intermediate and junior non-manual	9	10	11	13	11
Skilled manual and own account non-professional	13	8	12	14	11
Semi-skilled manual and personal service	9	6	17	17	11
Unskilled manual	(nil)	18	8	(6)	12
All persons	12	10	12	14	12
	Base = 100 per cent.				
Professional	53	69	22	5	149
Employer and Managers	81	138	89	42	350
Intermediate and junior non-manual	79	235	105	68	487
Skilled manual and own account non-professional	209	312	179	73	773
Semi-skilled manual and personal service	78	190	116	86	470
Unskilled manual	27	55	40	31	153
All persons	547	1,070	568	320	2,505

[1] Married women whose husbands were in the household are classified according to their husband's occupation; children under 16 are classified according to their father's occupation. Members of the Armed Forces, persons in inadequately described occupations and all persons who have never worked are not shown as separate categories but are included in the figures for all persons.
( ) Indicates the actual numbers not percentages where the base is too small for the calculation of percentages.

Deportation Orders

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deportation orders were made in Scotland in each year since 1979 to the latest date.

Mr. Waddington: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the replies given today to his questions to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many kidney transplants have taken place over the past five years; how many failed; how many lasted six months, six months to two years, two years to five years, five years to 10 years and longer than 10 years; and if he will give similar figures for heart and lung transplants and for liver transplants.

Mrs. Currie: According to the latest information provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Service (UKTS), the number of cadaveric kidney transplants performed in the United Kingdom within the National Health Service during the five years up to 31 December 1986, was 6,449[1]. The UKTS has been notified of the failure of 1,669 of these grafts.

The remaining information for which my hon. Friend asked is not available in exactly the form requested. A detailed analysis has been possible only on 6,191 patients. Of these, a total of 4,528 grafts were known to have survived for at least six months, and 2,631 to have survived for at least two years. These figures cannot be used to calculate accurate survival rates because they exclude grafts performed less than six months and less than two years respectively before the end of the period. Reliable data are not available to calculate graft survival over a five or 10-year period.

During the same five-year period 518 heart transplants, 99 heart/lung transplants, three lung transplants and 307 liver transplants were carried out. Information on graft survival for these transplants is not available centrally.

[1] Following recent discussions with the UKTS about the source of data quoted in earlier answers and late notifications of transplants performed in recent years, some adjustments have been made to the annual total numbers. The years affected and the revised figures for the numbers of cadaveric transplants performed are:

	Number
1982	1,033
1985	1,336
1986	[1]1,493

[1] Notified to date, additional notifications may necessitate further revision.

These have been included in the five-year total given.

St. Paul's Eye Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the longest time a patient has been kept on the waiting list for treatment at St. Paul's eye hospital, Liverpool.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not available from the sample information held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Liverpool district health authority for the information requested.

National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply dated 25 March, *Official Report*, columns *196-97*, concerning class 2 and class 4 contributions, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing (i) the numbers with earnings-profits above the upper level and (ii) his estimate of the distribution by range of income in each case for 1987-88 or for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the actual number of class 4 contributors who earn more than the upper profits limit is not available but the estimates shown in the table, which have been derived from the Inland Revenue's income survey for the latest available year, give a good indication of the numbers involved. They will contain some overstatement, which is unlikely to be substantial, as they include those self-employed people not liable to pay class 4 contributions because of being over retirement age or of being concurrently employed earners and paying the maximum National Insurance in class 1 and class 2 contributions.

People with income from self-employment greater than the upper profits limit for class 4 National Insurance contributions (thousands) (United Kingdom) 1984-85

Ranges of self-employment income:	*Number*
Upper profits limit (£13,000) to £14,999	57
£15,000 to £19,999	98
£20,000 to £24,999	61
£25,000 or above	83
Total number with incomes above the upper profits limit	299

1. The Inland Revenue's income survey is a statistical sample survey of taxpayer's records.
2. Income is defined net of losses, stock relief and capital allowances.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply dated 25 March, *Official Report*, column *197-98*, concerning the cost of a reduction of one percentage point in national insurance contributions, whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table accounting for (i) the difference between the employers' and employees' contributions in terms of higher earnings or reduced rates and (ii) the figure for the employees' contribution at reduced rates; and if he will add figures for the self-employed.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

	£ million
Estimated cost of one percentage point reduction in employers' contribution rates in 1987-88	1,770
Estimated cost of one percentage point reduction in employees' contribution rates in 1987-88	1,590
Difference	180
Accounted for by:	
Cut in employers' contributions in respect of earnings above the Upper Earnings Limit	105
Cut in employers' contributions in respect of married women who pay the reduced rate: (rate for employees assumed to be static)	60
Cut in employers' contributions in respect of employed earners who do not pay primary contributions	15

A reduction of one percentage point in the reduced rate paid by married women and widows in 1987-88 would cost about £60 million for the full year in reduced employee contributions.

Class 2 contributions for the self-employed are not levied on a percentage basis but a reduction of one percentage point in the class 4 (self-employed) contribution rate in 1987-88 would cost about £60 million for the full year.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department issues to health authorities with regard to procedures to be adopted for the disposal of clinical waste; and whether there have been any amendments to these to guard against the spread of AIDS.

Mr. Newton: Health Notice HN(82)22, a copy of which is in the Library, commended to health authorities a Health and Safety Commission code of guidance "The Safe Disposal of Clinical Waste". The procedures in this code, if followed correctly, are sufficient to guard against the spread of AIDS, although the need for further guidance is kept under consideration.

NHS (Staff Shortages)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the most recent total expenditures by each health authority in England and Wales on agency nursing to fill staff shortages.

Mr. Newton: The figures for English authorities were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 17 December 1986, at columns *574-78*. These provisional figures are now confirmed. Expenditure by Welsh authorities is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Aitken asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to report on the outcome of his consideration of the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods report on irradiated food.

Mrs. Currie: No. The Advisory Committee has only recently given Health and Agriculture Ministers its further advice in the light of comments made on its original report. Ministers are now considering the report.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid for by his Department in *(a)* Ilford, North, *(b)* Ilford, South, *(c)* Barking and *(d)* Dagenham; and what is the cost in each case over the last 12 months.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Allowances

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of *(a)* mobility allowance, *(b)* war pensioners' mobility supplement, *(c)* attendance allowance at the lower rate, *(d)* attendance allowance at the higher rate, *(e)* invalid care allowance and *(f)* severe disablement allowance at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The information requested is set out in the table:

Benefit	*Latest date for which figures are available*	*Number of recipients*
Mobility allowance	April 1987	474,000
War pensioners mobility supplement	December 1986	[1]13,000
Attendance allowance		
Lower rate	March 1986	[1]348,000
Higher rate	March 1986	[1]237,000
Invalid care allowance	March 1987	56,000
Severe disablement allowance	April 1986	[2]261,000

[1] Estimate.
[2] Provisional estimate.

Brighton General Hospital

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what new facilities have been added to the Brighton general hospital in each of the last eight years; and what has been the cost in both capital and revenue terms;

(2) what is the estimated site value of Brighton general hospital; and what has been the annual total revenue and capital expenditure on the hospital for each of the last 10 years;

(3) how many students are trained in both graduate and post graduate studies in the Brighton general hospital;

(4) how many *(a)* nursing staff, *(b)* medical staff, *(c)* auxilliary care staff, *(d)* catering staff, *(e)* cleaners and support staff and *(f)* technical support staff have been employed in the Brighton general hospital for each of the last three years;

(5) what plans exist for repair and maintenance work and for development of the Brighton general hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. Information at this level of detail is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Brighton health authority for the information requested.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when Brighton general hospital was first opened; how many beds are currently open in the hospital; and what is the breakdown of bed usage by medical care provided.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member full and current information in the form requested. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Brighton health authority for the information he seeks.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Fowler: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits (Appeals)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what is *(a)* the average and *(b)* the longest time for (i) an appeal against an adjudication officer's decision

to be heard by a social security appeal tribunal and (ii) the results of such an appeal to be made known to the appellant, in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: The most recent figures available are for the quarter ended 30 September 1986 when the average time taken for an appeal to be heard in Scotland was 14·6 weeks. Of the appeals heard in the same quarter, the longest time taken for one to be heard was 151·1 weeks. The delay was a result of requests by the claimant for further time to obtain evidence in support of the appeal. Information on the longest time taken for an appeal to be heard where the actual hearing occurred in a quarter prior to quarter ended 30 September 1986 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Statistics on the length of time taken to advise an appellant of the results of an appeal to a social security appeal tribunal are not available and this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Council for Advancement of Communication for Deaf People

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the support given by his Department to the Council for Advancement of Communication for Deaf People in each of the last three years and specify what part of each sum has been given specifically for training and administrative expenses.

Mr. Major: In each of the last three years we have granted the council a total of £40,000 as a contribution towards central administration expenses.

Prison Visits (Travel Passes)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of travel passes given to applicants living in Scotland to allow visits to relatives in prison in Scotland and England, respectively, for the latest convenient period for which figures are available and the total cost to his Department of such passes in the same period.

Mr. Lyell: During the period 1 March 1987 to 31 March 1987 the Department issued 349 travel warrants to applicants living in Scotland; 301 were for visits to Scottish prisons and 48 to English prisons. The total value of the warrants was £6,720·15.

Maternity Payments

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Wolverhampton, North-East constituency claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested.

The Wolverhampton, North-East constituency is covered by the Department's local offices at Wolverhampton, North and Wolverhampton, South although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims for maternity grant received at these two offices during the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Wolverhampton, North	2,066
Wolverhampton, South	2,072

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Orkney and *(b)* Shetland claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The numbers of claims for maternity grant received during the 1986 calendar year at the Department's local offices at Kirkwall and Lerwick, which cover the constituency, were 216 and 356 respectively.

Unemployed People (Dependants)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the numbers dependent on unemployed persons in receipt of unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit; and if he will identify how many are *(a)* spouses, *(b)* children under 16 years and *(c)* children over 16 years.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available information is given in the table:

	Number of Dependants (000s)	
	Adult	*Under 19 years*
Claimant in receipt of Unemployment benefit only	[1]75·7	n.a.
Unemployment benefit and Supplementary benefit	[2]135	[3]209
Supplementary benefit only	[2]581	[3]916

[1] As at November 1986. Figure includes persons having care of claimant's child as well as spouse.
[2] Estimate as at February 1986. Figures are for partners.
[3] Estimate as at February 1986. No age breakdown of the numbers of children available.

West Midlands RHA (Food Contracts)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which firms hold contracts to supply food to the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: West Midlands regional health authority does not have any formal contracts for food items, but has arranged many purchasing agreements covering a comprehensive range of foodstuffs and related items. Individual hospital locations call off their own specific needs as required from companies with whom such arrangements have been made.

NHS (Charges)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the revenue from National Health Service charges in each year until 1990; and adopting Government assumptions about inflation, what prescription charges will be in each year until 1990.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is:

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Estimated NHS charge revenue (England)	487	520	550

It would be inappropriate to engage in speculative calculations about the level of prescription charges in future years, since there is no automatic presumption that they will be increased in line with general inflation, and no decisions about their future levels have been taken.

Overseas Health Services

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list visits, showing at what ministerial or official level, which have taken place to *(a)* France, *(b)* New Zealand, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* Australia since 1983 to examine aspects of their health services;

(2) what consideration has been given to, and what studies have taken place into, aspects of health service management or practice in (i) France, (ii) New Zealand, (iii) the United States of America and (iv) Australia since June 1983.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have the information that is available as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate, for each region, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole of *(a)* the numbers claiming supplementary benefit, *(b)* the numbers dependent on claims for suppplementary benefit, *(c)* the numbers claiming housing benefit, and *(d)* the numbers dependent on claims for housing benefit.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will uprate the proposed new basic benefit levels and premium levels contained in the technical appendix of his "Social Security Reform" White Paper *(a)* to April 1987 levels and prices and *(b)* taking into account the Treasury assumptions for price rises in 1987-88, at April 1988 levels and prices; and if he will estimate the difference between premium payments for each of the categories of beneficiary.

Mr. Major: The rates given in the technical annex to the White Paper were illustrative only, and a simple scaling of the figures in line with an assumed movement in prices would be misleading, the actual rates to be used in April 1988 will be decided nearer the time in the light of all the information then available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons previously registering as unemployed and claiming unemployment or supplementary benefit have, in the last 12 months been transferred to sickness benefit claims.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to change the rules governing the payment of suppplementary benefit to women who have received compensation for having been raped.

Mr. Major: Payments made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to victims of rape are treated for supplementary benefit purposes in the same way as any other payment of compensation for personal or criminal injury. They can be disregarded for up to two years, or even longer where it is considered reasonable to do so, if the money is put into a trust fund. They are then subject to the normal capital rules: benefit is not payable if a person has more than £3,000 capital.

We have no immediate plans to change this, but we are proposing changes in the income support scheme, which replaces supplementary benefit from April 1988, which would be beneficial to anyone receiving compensation for criminal injury. The two-year disregard of money put into a trust fund will be allowed automatically. In addition, the capital limit will be doubled from £3,000 to £6,000, but an income will be assumed for each band of £250 between £3,000 and £6,000. There must, however, be a limit to the value of capital that can be disregarded in an income-related benefit scheme, and we consider that these proposals strike a reasonable balance between the aims of a scheme that provides compensation from public funds and an income replacement scheme.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide estimates of the numbers of *(a)* family income supplement recipients and *(b)* standard housing benefit recipients by earnings distribution using the following ranges of gross weekly earnings: (i) below £80, (ii) £80 to £90, (iii) £90 to £100, (iv) £100 to £110, (v) £110 to £120 and (vi) above £120; and if he will indicate the average amount of benefit paid to those falling within each of these ranges.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *656*]: The following table gives the information for family income supplement recipients, except that it is not possible to give a breakdown of weekly earnings above £90.

Analysis of FIS families by gross earnings[1] of head—April 1986—Great Britain

Gross earnings of head	*Number of families in receipt of FIS*	*Average payment of FIS*
Below £80	115,000	18·20
£80 to £89·99	34,000	8·70
£90 and above	51,000	6·10
All	200,000	13·50

[1] Earnings include profits from self-employment and relate to the date of FIS claim.

I regret that it is not possible to provide reliable figures for housing benefit recipients in work.

Health Expenditure (London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) 2 April, *Official Report*, column 1221, he will tabulate in the *Official Report*, for each of the London region health authorities and health districts, respectively, the expenditure of each in real terms in 1979 and in 1986 showing the percentage increase or decrease stating or using the same statistical criteria.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will express *(a)* the basic pension and

(b) the single person's supplementary benefit level if unemployed as a percentage of average earnings in (i) 1957, (ii) 1979 and (iii) 1987.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the value at 1987 prices and as a percentage of the total of *(a)* Government contributions and *(b)* employers' contributions to the national insurance fund in 1979 and 1986; and what is his estimate of these contributions for each year until 1990, using Treasury assumptions.

Mr. Major: Employers' contributions and the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund in 1979-80, 1986-87 and 1987-88 (at 1987-88 prices), are as follows:

Great Britain

£ million at 1987-88 prices

	1979-80		*1986-87*		*1987-88*	
	Amount	*Percentage share of Fund income*	*Amount*	*Percentage share of Fund income*	*Amount*	*Percentage share of Fund income*
Employers Contributions	10,750	46·5	11,550	44·5	11,800	45
Treasury Supplement	4,050	17·5	2,500	9·5	2,030	7·5

Contribution rates and the size of the Treasury supplement are determined annually in the light of circumstances at the time. The Government do not make forward estimates of the individual elements of income to the national insurance fund.

Children's Allowances

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to maintain the real value of all children's allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We have no plans to alter the existing flexible arrangements for the uprating of children's allowances. The main children's allowances were increased in line with the percentage increase in the appropriate index from 6 April, demonstrating the Government's commitment to continuing support for families with children.

AIDS

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will authorise compensation for haemophiliacs who have contracted AIDS from infected factor VIII; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 15 January, at column *302*.

Leigham Clinic

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services who were the representatives of the proprietors of the Leigham Clinic in Leigham Court road, Streatham who met officials of his Department on 2 August 1985, in connection with alleged late abortions.

Mr. Newton: I suggest that my hon. Friend approach the proprietors direct.

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the dates when his officials have inspected the Leigham Clinic in Leigham Court road, Streatham, during the last five years in connection with the Abortion Act.

Mr. Newton: During the last five years officials have inspected the Leigham Clinic in connection with the Abortion Act on the following dates:

11 November 1982
17 May 1983
6 October 1983
15 February 1984
1 November 1984
6 August 1985
14 October 1985
1 May 1986
18 November 1986
12 February 1987

Nurses and Midwives (Pay)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has received in support of the full recommended pay award to nurses and midwives to be proposed by the review body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Department has received some 90 letters on this point.

Maternity Units

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the number of general practitioner maternity units which have closed since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The numbers of National Health Service hospital general practitioner maternity units in 1979 and 1985 were 256 and 214 respectively.

Attendance Allowance Board

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to begin publishing the guidance and instructions of the Attendance Allowance Board.

Mr. Major: The Attendance Allowance Board intends to publish in the summer a full revision of the handbook for its delegated medical practitioners.

Hip Operations

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the percentage of patients in the North West Thames region who in 1980 waited for more than a year for a hip operation; and what was the comparable percentage of patients waiting for this period of time in 1985.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. It is not available from the sample information held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority for the information requested.

Nurses

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of qualified state enrolled nurses and of qualified state registered nurses employed by the National Health Service, for each year since 1974.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 February 1987, c. *236*]: The table shows all enrolled nurses and registered nurses and midwives working in National Health Service hospitals and in primary health care in England, from September 1974 to September 1985 inclusive (the latest date for which such detail is available).

Registered Nurses and Midwives, and Enrolled Nurses employed by the National Health Service in Hospitals and in primary health care[1] England 1974-1985

Staff in post at 30 September	*Whole-time equivalents[2]* *Registered Nurses and Midwives*	*Enrolled Nurses*
1974	113,100	42,900
1975	119,500	47,300
1976	123,600	50,600
1977	126,800	53,800
1978	129,500	56,500
1979	132,200	57,600
1980	135,600	60,300
1981	143,200	65,700
1982	147,600	68,400
1983	149,600	69,900
1984	152,500	71,100
1985	157,700	72,300

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS non-medical manpower.

[1] Excludes staff in administrative and centrally based services. Not adjusted for reduction in nurses' working hours in 1980 from 40 to 37·5 hours per week or for increases in bank holiday entitlements in 1977 and 1978.

[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100 whole-time equivalents.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients are currently undergoing kidney dialysis treatment on Merseyside; how many patients are on the waiting list; and what is the longest period of time which has elapsed since any of the outstanding cases were referred for dialysis treatment.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *210*]: Information in the form requested is not available centrally. The latest data available to the Department are supplied by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association. These show that at the end of December 1985 there were 229 patients on haemodialysis in the Mersey region. Currently, all demand for dialysis treatment in the region is being met and the regional health authority expects to keep pace with that demand in the future.

Abortions

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of legal abortions performed in England and Wales on women resident in each health and social services board area in Northern Ireland in 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *108*]: The table shows the information which is available without incurring disproportionate cost.

Number of notifications of legal abortions carried out in England and Wales, to residents of Northern Ireland by County and/or County Borough[1] 1984-86

County/County Borough[1] of usual residence	*1984*	*1985*	*[2]1986*
Antrim	330	369	423
Armagh	101	113	89
Down	246	296	323
Fermanagh	43	63	45
Londonderry and Londonderry County Borough	150	155	166
Tyrone	147	125	135
Belfast County Borough	500	505	536
Ulster or Northern Ireland not otherwise specified	13	11	8
Total	1,530	1,637	1,725

[1] Pre-1974 boundaries.

[2] Includes notifications received by end of February 1987 — provisional.

Board-and-Lodging Changes

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will be changing the arrangements for paying benefit to people in lodgings following the issue of the consultative document "Help with Board and Lodging Charges for People on Low Incomes"; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The consultative document proposed that from April 1988 unemployed people in lodgings should be eligible for housing benefit to meet their accommodation costs and income support for their other needs. This change would replace existing provision whereby supplementary benefit meets both housing and living costs.

Over 170 responses were received. There was widespread acceptance of the principle that any differences between benefits payable to boarders not in work and other claimants should be based on actual differences in their circumstances. Most who commented recognised that change on the lines proposed was logical but a number of practical concerns were raised. The local authority associations, in particular, argued strongly that the change should not be made in April 1988 when local authorities will be fully occupied in starting to administer the new housing benefit scheme.

The Government accept the force of this argument, and have decided to implement the change from April 1989, one year later than originally proposed. In the run-up to

the new system, detailed arrangements for the transition will be worked out with local authorities, especially those in areas with high concentrations of boarder claimants. Discussions will also continue with local authority and other interests on the position of boarders in supported lodging schemes, on whose behalf it has been argued that similar considerations arise to those affecting hostels. As indicated in the consultative document, the Government intend to defer a final decision on arrangements for hostels in order to set them in the context of the current work on related aspects of community care. The position of people in supported lodgings will also be considered in this context.

There is clear research evidence that the lifestyle and circumstances of boarders are close to those of the far larger number living in other multiply occupied dwellings. Paying higher rates of income support to some or all boarders, as some have suggested, would simply perpetuate the distortions our proposals are designed to rectify. The Government have therefore decided that, from April 1989, the generality of people not in work in ordinary board and lodgings should qualify for income support and housing benefit in the same way as everyone else. For ease of administration and certainty for claimants, deductions from housing benefit in respect of meals provided will be fixed at standard rates. This is the course preferred by local authorities. On the basis of current information about food costs, the deduction for breakfasts only would be of the order of £1, and for full board £11·50.

During the interim period from April 1988, boarders will continue to receive benefit on broadly the same lines as now with some adjustments to align these provisions with the new structure of income support. Time limits will continue to apply to benefit for younger boarders until the new system is introduced.

The Government remain committed to provision for boarders which will enable real needs to be met while keeping expenditure under control and curbing abuse. The system to be introduced from April 1989 will not only achieve those ends, but remove a source of distortion in the housing market and secure equity between boarders in and out of work, and income support claimants in all types of tenure.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 10 April 1987

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Project Zircon

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 8 April, what is his estimate of the additional man hours spent by the Crown Office as a result of parliamentary interest in the project Zircon case; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is not possible to estimate the man hours involved.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kampuchea

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral development aid his Department has provided to Kampuchea since 1979.

Mr. Chris Patten: British bilateral aid to Cambodia for 1979-85 was as follows:

	£'000s
1979	703
1980	480
1981	110
1982	18
1983	693
1984	18
1985	18

We make contributions to a number of multilateral aid agencies, such as UNICEF and the world food programme, which have given aid to Cambodia. Figures for multilateral aid are available in an OECD Statistical publication "Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows for Developing Countries" a copy of which is available in the Library.

Since 1979 Britain has provided, largely through international organisations, over £13 million to the international relief effort for refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. J. Leach (Correspondence)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will respond to the letters of 27 January and 17 February from the hon. Member for Dundee, East regarding his constituent Mr. J. Leach.

Mr. Waddington: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Albany Prison (Disciplinary Charges)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disciplinary charges were made against inmates in Her Majesty's prison Albany between 1 January 1986 and 30 June 1986; and in how many cases was the verdict not guilty.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the following table.

Offences[1] against prison discipline dealt with at Albany prison in the period 1 January to 30 June 1986; by outcome of adjudication

Outcome of adjudication	*Number of charges[2]*
Charge proved	607
Charge dismissed	30
Case referred to police	3
Adjudication not completed	2
TOTAL	642

[1] Including offences committed at other establishments; excluding offences committed at Albany but dealt with at other establishments.
[2] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate, detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Life Sentence Prisoners

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons sentenced to life imprisonment or detention during Her Majesty's pleasure are currently serving such sentences in England and Wales; and how many were serving such sentences *(a)* 10, *(b)* 20 and *(c)* 30 years ago.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the table below:

Population of life sentence[1] prisoners in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 31 December 1956, 1966, 1976 and 1986

Year	*Number of prisoners[2,3]*
1956	110
1966	470
1976	1,260
1986	2,290

[1] Including person detained during Her Majesty's pleasure or for life under Section 53 Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and those serving custody for life.
[2] The figures are rounded estimates based on records held centrally which are approximate, particularly for the earlier years. Detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
[3] Including prisoners who had been recalled after having been released on licence.

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of sentence served by prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the distribution of time served under sentence by life sentence prisoners received since 1965 is published in Table 4(e) of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1985", Cmnd. 9903.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new guidelines or instructions have been issued to immigration officials concerning entry clearance of persons known or suspected to be suffering from AIDS or who are HIV positive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member's question on 2 March at column *468*.

Immigration

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *468*, what information he has as to the intended purpose of the visit by the airline steward refused entry at Gatwick airport.

Mr. Waddington: In the case reported in the press the passenger sought entry as a tourist.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many out of the total number of persons treated as illegal entrants in 1986 who were granted temporary entrance subsequently absconded.

Mr. Waddington: Out of 613 illegal entrants who were given temporary admission in 1986, a total of 51 absconded.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of passengers granted temporary admission in 1986; and how many of these subsequently absconded;

(2) what was the total number of passengers detained overnight under Immigration Act powers during 1986, by nationality;

(3) how many people were detained overnight during 1986 in *(a)* Harmondsworth detention centre, *(b)* Queen's Building, Heathrow and *(c)* Beehive, Gatwick.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide, for the latest convenient date, a table indicating the total number or persons detained under Immigration Act powers in prison department establishments, by category and individual prison establishment;

(2) if he will provide, for the latest convenient date, a table indicating the period of time spent in prison department establishments by persons detained under Immigration Act powers showing the numbers detained for not more than one, two, three, four, five, six and more than six months, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: On 31 March 1987, 63 persons were detained in prison department establishments under the deportation powers and 30 as illegal entrants.

The number detained in individual prison establishments was as follows:

Prison establishment	*Under deportation powers*	*As illegal entrants*
Barlinnie	—	1
Bedford	1	—
Belfast	—	1
Birmingham	2	—
Bristol	1	—
Bullwood Hall	1	—
Canterbury	1	1
Foston Hall	—	1
Glen Parva	1	—
Holloway	1	—
Hull	—	1
Latchmere House	36	18
Leeds	—	1
Leicester	4	—
Parkhurst	1	—
Pentonville	11	2
Perth	—	2
Risley	1	—
Saughton	—	2
Wandsworth	1	—
Winchester	1	—

The information about the period of detention is as follows:

Not more than	*Under deportation powers*	*As illegal entrants*
One month	27	16
Two months	22	6
Three months	8	5
Four months	3	—
Five months	1	2
Six months	—	1
More than six months	2	—

The information about passengers who were detained after refusal of leave to enter will take some time to assemble and I will write to the hon. Member.

Remands

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the introduction of time limits for the length of time a prisoner may be remanded in custody referred to in paragraph 3 of the "Government Reply to the Third Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86", Cm. 115.

Mr. Mellor: As a first step, statutory time limits on periods in custody in criminal proceedings were introduced on 1 April, in three police areas: Avon and Somerset, Kent and the west midlands.

Prisons (Medical Services)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the members of the working group set up by the president of the Royal College of Physicians to advise the director of prison medical services on qualifications and training for prison medical officers.

Mr. Mellor: The following comprise the President of the Royal College of Physicians' working group.

Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, KBE, MD, PRCP, *(Chairman)*
Dr. H. Baderman, FRCP *(Honorary Secretary)*
H-J. B. Galbraith Esq. MD, FRCP
M. R. Baker Esq. MD, MFCM
T. H. Bewley Esq. MD, PRCPsych
Dr. J. Higgins, FRCPsych, DPM
Dr. J. L. Kilgour, CB, FFCM, MRCGP
R. Lancaster Esq. SRN *(Royal College of Nursing)*
Dr. E. E. J. Martin, MA, FRCGP
Dr. K. H. Nickol, FRCP, FFOM, DIH
Dr. Richard Smith, MB MHB
Mrs. E. Whitaker, OBE, JP, *(Board of Visitors, Wakefield Prison)*

Observers
Dr. Pamela G. W. Mason, FRCPsych, DPM, *(DHSS)*
K. R. North Esq. *(Home Office)*

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made since

July 1985 in establishing a unified nursing service for prison establishments, indicating the numbers of nursing staff currently holding formal nursing qualifications and the numbers training exclusively in service.

Mr. Mellor: An essential first stage in the development of a unified service is the recruitment of men and women with nursing qualifications to train as prison hospital officers (uniformed staff combining custodial management and nursing skills). Since July 1985 there has been a 60 per cent. increase in the number of hospital officers who hold a nursing qualification. Currently just under 300 members of the prison nursing service hold a qualification, including some 160 hospital officers. On 9 April, four qualified nurses were receiving or had been accepted for prison officer training with a view to becoming hospital officers and over 100 applications were under consideration.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the proposals for changes in prison service medical documentation which have been endorsed by Ministers, indicating what changes have so far been implemented.

Mr. Mellor: The proposals centre on a system of discrete medical files for individual prisoners which transfer with them from one establishment to another under sealed cover for the attention of the medical officer. In addition to the modification of various medical documents, other proposed changes include a central storage facility for the medical files of discharged inmates. Medical officers will be further encouraged to seek previous medical histories on any new inmate, irrespective of category, whenever there is reason to think that to be clinically indicated. The Department will clarify with DHSS opportunities for conveying to general practitioners medical information arising during the currency of imprisonment.

Managing medical officers have been asked to introduce the central proposal; most of them have done so and the remainder are working to that end.

Metropolitan Police (Equal Opportunities Unit)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many officers of the Metropolitan police force's equal opportunities unit, and what ranks, deal with *(a)* sexual and *(b)* racial discrimination.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the designated Equal Opportunities Officer is a Deputy Assistant Commissioner, who chairs the force working parties on sexual and racial discrimination. The equal opportunities unit reports to a commander, and has one inspector and one sergeant dealing full time with sexual discrimination and one inspector dealing full time with racial discrimination.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average daily prison population of those detained under Immigration Act powers in 1986.

Mr. Mellor: In 1986 the average population of persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales was 132.

Special Constables

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police authorities authorise the wearing of reinforced helmets by special constables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The equipment issued to special constables is a matter for each chief officer of police, and the information requested is not held centrally.

Bilingual Forms

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that all coroners in Wales issue coroners' certificates in a bilingual format; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is not sufficient demand to justify this. Coroners in Wales will arrange to issue certificates in bilingual format in any particular case, if requested to do so.

Mr. Wigley: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are taken to ensure that the provisions of the Registration of Births, Still Births and Deaths (Welsh Language) Regulations 1969 and the Coroners (Welsh Forms) Rules 1970 are fully observed in Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no evidence of non-compliance with either of these permissive regulations.

Coroners (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many of Her Majesty's coroners currently holding office in Wales, are Welsh-speaking; and how many are not Welsh speaking.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not readily available and I will reply as soon as possible.

West German State Lottery

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate a publicity campaign to advice United Kingdom residents that it is contrary to the law to participate in the West German state lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. While the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 prohibits a number of activities in connection with lotteries promoted overseas, including advertising, it is not unlawful to take part in any such lottery. The Gaming Board for Great Britain draws attention to the law where there is evidence that it may have been broken.

Maguire Case

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Surrey as to the precise date on which police

inquiries into the matters raised in paragraph 39 of his Department's memorandum on the Maguire case were completed.

Mr. Mellor: The inquiries on which the sixth sentence of paragraph 39 is based were made by the Metropolitan police, who first arrested the Maguire family. At the time when the memorandum was drawn up, the Metropolitan police had reported that they had no written record of Vincent Maguire showing them a stick of chalk or any similar object. Subsequently, on 10 February, we were informed that none of the Metropolitan police officers involved in the case could verify his account of the matter (on which evidence had been offered at the trial).

In the light of comments since made on paragraph 39 of the memorandum, we shall be consulting the chief constable of Surrey.

Mr. Denis Wilkinson

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the representations made to him by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, about the evidence provided by Mr. Denis Wilkinson which secured the conviction of a number of defendants.

Mr. Mellor: We have arranged for inquiries to be made into the allegations about the evidence provided by Mr. Wilkinson. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as I can.

Constituency Boundaries

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any further recommendations from the Boundary Commission regarding minor review proposals for parliamentary constituency boundaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not received any further reports from the parliamentary boundary commissions since the English commission submitted a report on 40 constituencies on 9 February 1987. In that report the commission said that it would submit a separate report on two constituencies which had been the subject of a local inquiry in February 1987. I understand that this report will be submitted very shortly. The English commission informed us on 10 December 1986 of an interim review of 55 constituencies, including Burnley. I understand that a report on 53 of these 55 constituencies will be submitted in a few weeks. The Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales informed us of an interim review of 21 Welsh constituencies on 17 February 1986 and I understand that a report on this review is also expected within the next few weeks.

Police (Helicopters)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many times during the past 12 months a Metropolitan police helicopter has been used in Newham; what incidents were involved; and what arrests resulted from information received from the helicopter crew.

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *218*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the Metropolitan police air support unit answered 165 calls in the London borough of Newham in 1986. These calls concerned various matters, including robberies, burglaries, traffic and searches for missing persons. Forty two arrests resulted from the incidents in which the helicopters were used.

Salvador Mendoza and Reynaldo Blanco

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Salvador Mendoza and Reynaldo Blanco, members of the El Salvador Human Rights Commission, were stopped and searched by immigration officals when they arrived from Ostend on 29 March.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *12*]: Mr. Reynaldo Blanco Rojas and another Salvadorean national arrived together at Dover from Ostend on 29 March at 2.30 pm. The immigration officer examined them for the purpose of determining whether they qualified for leave to enter in accordance with the immigration rules. They at first claimed to be students and sought entry as tourists for a period of three days. The immigration officer was not at that stage satisfied that they were genuine visitors and required them to submit to further examination. At 4 pm, after further questioning and examination of their luggage and personal effects, the immigration officer decided that they could properly be admitted as visitors and granted them leave to enter the United Kingdom for a period of one month.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Sixth Form

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what, on the basis of present local authority plans for tertiary education, are the Department's estimates of the effect on the number of places taken up in traditional sixth forms;

(2) what effect the introduction of tertiary colleges has had on the number of places taken up in conventional sixth form provision over the last seven years.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in the form requested.

Brent (HMI Report)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the report of Her Majesty's inspectors on education in Brent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has not yet received the report from Her Majesty's inspectors. He hopes to do so by Easter. He will then consider in the normal way whether to publish it.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the progress of the establishment of city technology colleges and their funding.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Dixons Group plc announced on 8 April that it would provide sponsorship of £1 million for the establishment of a second city technology college to be

located in south Yorkshire. This is a further indication of the imaginative and encouraging response my right hon. Friend's proposals have received. Discussions with other prospective sponsors are well advanced and my right hon. Friend hopes soon to announce details of further city technology colleges.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table grouping local education authorities into those controlled on 1 January 1986 by the Conservative party, those controlled by the Labour party, those controlled by the alliance parties and those with no overall control, showing for each authority, the average for each group and the overall average *(a)* the average primary school class size for January 1985 and January 1986, *(b)* the average secondary school class size for pupils under 14 in January 1985 and January 1986 and *(c)* the average secondary school class size for pupils over 14 in January 1985 and January 1986.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply as soon as possible.

St. Anne's Secondary School, Heaton Chapel

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions there have been between Stockport metropolitan borough, the Salford diocese and himself about the rebuilding of the fire-damaged section of St. Anne's secondary school, Heaton Chapel; and when he expects the work to be completed.

Mr. Dunn: Discussions are currently in progress between the Salford diocese and Stockport metropolitan borough council about the rebuilding of the school's science block, for completion by September 1988.

School Leavers (Easter)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many persons left school on the Easter leaving date in 1983, and in 1986; and what is his best estimate of the numbers who will leave school at Easter 1987.

Mr. Dunn: Information for the academic year 1985-86 is not yet available. There were 45,400 pupils reported as leaving English schools in the Spring term of 1985. The corresponding figure for 1983 was 47,100. No estimate is available for 1987.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many persons leaving school at Easter in 1986 registered to take O-level or other examinations during 1986.

Mr. Dunn: Information for the academic year 1985-86 is not yet available. There were 15,300 pupils reported as leaving English schools in the Spring term of 1985 who attempted GCE O-level or CSE examinations in the summer of that year.

Autistic Children

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the annual amount paid by his Department on research into autistic problems in education for each year over the past eight years indicating the local education authorities to which it was paid, the research projects involved and the number of teachers specially trained as teachers for autistic children.

Mr. Dunn: No research into the educational aspects of autism has been funded over the past eight years. There are no specific qualifications for teaching autistic children.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* those local education authorities which have *(a)* special schools, *(b)* centres or *(c)* special arrangements for the teaching of autistic children, indicating which provide boarding accommodation.

Mr. Dunn: The information is not available. Since 1983 special schools have not been classified in accordance with the categories of the handicap of the pupils for which they cater. No central record is maintained of centres or other arrangements for teaching children with special educational needs.

WALES

Children (Special Educational Needs)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representatives he has received concerning the training and further professional development of teachers of children with special educational needs; whether he intends making changes to established practices in this sphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received one letter from a group of lecturers in Wales who are concerned about this matter, and five letters from hon. Members. The Government have accepted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee for the Supply and Education of Teachers that specialist qualifications to teach deaf children, as well as children with other disabilities, should be acquired after qualification as a teacher in the normal way and after a period of experience of teaching in an ordinary school. Under the new local education authority training grants scheme, which came into operation on 1 April 1987, over £200,000 has been allocated to authorities in Wales for the training of existing teachers to meet the special educational needs of pupils with learning difficulties. The Welsh Office will be monitoring what use the local education authorities make of these funds.

Ysbyty Gwynedd (Opening Ceremony)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost to the Welsh Office arising from the official opening ceremony of Ysbyty Gwynedd undertaken by the Prime Minister in March.

Mr. Mark Robinson: One official responsible for health matters represented the Welsh Office at a cost of less than £200 in travel and subsistence. In addition, two Welsh Office press officers accompanied the Prime Minister throughout her official tour of north Wales. It would not be meaningful to attempt to allocate a cost to their time spent at Ysbyty Gwynedd.

PRIME MINISTER

West German State Lottery

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the practice of the Government of West Germany of issuing letters in the English language to United Kingdom residents inviting them to participate in illegal lotteries designed solely to provide revenue for the West German Government; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. We are pursuing this matter with the appropriate authorities within the relevant states of the Federal Republic of Germany.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Newspapers (Takeovers and Mergers)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many complaints have been received by the Director of Fair Trading in relation to newspaper takeovers and mergers in each of the years 1980 to 1986;

(2) how many complaints have been received by his Department in each of the years 1980 to 1986 in relation to undertakings given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission regarding newspaper takeovers and mergers.

Mr. Pattie: The Director General of Fair Trading has no statutory functions in relation to newspaper takeovers and mergers. Any assurances which may be given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission regarding newspaper takeovers and mergers have no statutory underpinning. It is, however, open to the Commission to recommend that conditions should be attached to the Secretary of State's consent to a newspaper transfer; and it is in turn open to the Secretary of State to attach to his consent such conditions as he sees fit.

My Department does not keep records of the number of complaints which are received concerning undertakings to the Commission or the observance of conditions attached to the Secretary of State's consent. But recently my Department has received one complaint concerning an undertaking to the Commission which was reflected neither in a condition recommended by the Commission nor in a condition attached to the Secretary of State's consent and since 1985 six complaints related to conditions attached to a consent given by the Secretary of State.

Business Improvement Scheme (West Penwith)

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of the business improvement scheme for West Penwith.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The business improvement services scheme in the Penzance and St. Ives travel-to-work area started operating in July 1986. Since then 89 offers of assistance have been made to applicants, worth £394,412.

I am pleased to see that the scheme has been well received locally.

South Africa

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the European Economic Community code of conduct on South Africa applies to British companies with interests in South Africa which employ more than 20 black Africans; and what is his position if these employees are located at different enterprises, none of which individually employs as many as 20 black Africans.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department looks for the submission of a full report in all cases where a British company holds 50 per cent. or more of the equity of a South African company. The Government recognise that provision of detailed reports would be inappropriate where the South African company's total employment includes fewer than 20 black Africans.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the minimum wage recommended in the European Economic Community code of conduct on South Africa is calculated for a family of five; and what regard is paid to *(a)* sex, *(b)* marital status or *(c)* age.

Mr. Alan Clark: The minimum wage recommendations in the EC code of conduct refer companies to the supplemented living level figures produced by the University of South Africa. UNISA's figures are based on survey data and calculated for families of varying sizes, including a family of five, which is the recommended minimum wage level in the EC code, regardless of sex, marital status or age.

Housing (London)

Mr. Raymond asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what evidence he based the claim, in the Government's booklet in support of locating the European Community Trade Marks Office in London, that inexpensive housing is available in plenty both in and out of London.

Mr. Pattie: The booklet's purpose is to demonstrate the advantages of London as the location of the proposed Community trade marks office relative to other European cities contending for this Office. Houses in London are not expensive when compared with houses of a similar type and in similar areas in other contending cities.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report on the Internal Market Council held on 7 April.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Council continued discussion on proposals for Directives on the controls and formalities applicable to EC nationals at intra-Community borders, on a right of residence for EC nationals in other member states, and on a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas for the purposes of professional qualifications.

Rover Group

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on progress on the disposal of Rover Group truck and bus activities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 19 February my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry informed the House that the Government had accepted the Rover Group's recommendation that Leyland Trucks, Freight

Rover, and the related parts operations and overseas subsidiaries of the Rover Group should combine with DAF Trucks in a new joint venture company. The agreement between Rover Group and DAF to transfer these businesses to the new merged company, Leyland DAF Ltd, was completed on 6 April.

On 13 January I informed the House that the sale of Leyland Bus to a management-led consortium had been completed. The Government have now accepted the Rover Group's proposal to dispose of Leyland DAB, the Group's wholly-owned bus manufacturing subsidiary in Denmark, to its management, subject to final negotiations and procedures at the annual general meeting of Leyland DAB on 14 April.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held between Britain and Vietnam over the past 12 months concerning the future of Vietnamese refugees.

Mr. Renton: We have held no formal discussions with the Vietnamese Government on this subject.

Hong Kong

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received about the Hong Kong law about the publication of false news; and what consultations have been held with the Hong Kong Government on the subject.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 3 April at column *643*. While this is primarily a matter for the Hong Kong Government, they have kept us fully informed of developments.

Bahrein

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British assistance to Bahrein.

Mr. Renton: No money has been allocated to Bahrein from the British aid programme. There are no British loan service personnel in Bahrain at present, though some have in the past undertaken training there.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the supply by British companies of security specialists or former British military personnel to the Government of Bahrein.

Mr. Renton: We are aware that a number of British citizens have been directly recruited by the Government of Bahrain. Their employment is a private commercial arrangement between them and the government of an independent country.

Gaza Strip

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the continuing role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Gaza strip and the status of refugees there.

Mr. Renton: We fully support United Nations Relief and Works Agency's vital humanitarian work on behalf of Palestinian refugees in the Gaza strip.

British Summer Time

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he proposes to seek the consent of the European Economic Community to extend British summer time.

Mr. Renton: No.

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in support of the extension of British summer time.

Mr. Renton: We have received no such representations. The primary responsibility for British summer time rests with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

West German State Lottery

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the result of the representations which his Department made to the West German authorities regarding the literature sent by the West German state lottery to the hon. Member for Southend, East and to other British citizens inviting them to participate in an illegal lottery designed to provide funds for the West German Government, details of which were supplied to the Home Secretary and the Minister for Consumer Affairs in February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Following representations made by the British Consulate General in Hamburg, the authorities who run the North West German lottery on behalf of the six states in the Federal Republic of Germany have instructed all agencies involved in promoting the lottery to take note of the relevant parts of the Lotteries and Amusements Act of 1976.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will invite the European Economic Community Commission to determine whether member states are empowered to prevent the distribution of lottery tickets being issued by member states in the same way as they can take action against such materials being issued by non-European Economic Community Governments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. The terms of the Lotteries and Amusements Act of 1976 apply equally to lotteries promoted in European Community member states and in other countries.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will invite the Government of West Germany to return to the United Kingdom all payments made by United Kingdom residents in response to invitations sent by the West German state lottery to United Kingdom citizens asking for contributions to their official lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. The lottery is the responsibility of states' governments rather than the Federal Government.

Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there have been any changes in the amount, value and disposition of gold held under the control of the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold in the past three years.

Mr. Renton: The amount and disposition of the gold have remained unchanged. Its value has changed only in accordance with changes in world prices.

Mr. Jeff Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will list the proposed recipients of the gold held by the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold after settlement of outstanding claims and state what steps he has taken to inform the proposed recipients of the procedure being used for its distribution.

Mr. Renton: The allocated amounts of gold have all been delivered, except that for Albania. Once that has been delivered, the remaining gold will be distributed among the claimant countries (Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Yugoslavia) in proportion to their allocations. This final distribution will be conducted in accordance with procedures to be established by the tripartite commission.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if there have been any changes in the British commissioner to the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold in the past three years.

Mr. Renton: No. The current British commissioner is Mr. M. B. Collins OBE, commercial counsellor at the British embassy in Brussels.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any meetings of the tripartite commission for the restitution of monetary gold have taken place since his reply of 3 November 1986, *Official Report*, column 309.

Mr. Renton: No.

Diplomatic Staff

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff accredited with diplomatic status work in the offices of the British High Commissioner in *(a)* Australia, *(b)* India and *(c)* Canada.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *643*]:

	Number
(a) Australia	26
(b) India	101
(c) Canada	22

The figures include immigration and British Council staff. They also include subordinate posts in India but not in Australia or Canada, where staff have consular rather than diplomatic status.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will list those bodies and organisations which have applied to become managing agents for the new job training scheme in each manpower services commission area; and in each case which of those listed have been selected.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Manpower Services Commission are currently negotiating and signing contracts with managing agents. As soon as the relevant information has been assembled, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General if he will specify the precise dates on which each of the administrative changes made to the compilation of the unemployment figures since 1979 was introduced.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following changes have been made to the compilation of the monthly instalment figures since 1979:

Date for which unadjusted count was first affected

11 November 1982
Switch from count of registrants at jobcentres and careers offices to count of benefit claimants, following introduction of voluntary registration at jobcentres.

6 March 1986
Delay in compilation by two weeks to remove mistaken over-recording caused by late arrival of information about the status of claimants.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will provide the figures for the numbers of people who have been *(a)* continuously unemployed since May 1979, *(b)* continuously unemployed since June 1983 and *(c)* who have never had a job since leaving school; and if he will provide figures for each region, and for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the form requested. The following table gives the number of claimants in the regions of the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over four years on 8 January 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available (information on those unemployed over eight years is not available). It also shows for those areas the numbers of unemployed claimants of all ages who had not had a job since leaving full-time education at 12 February 1987, together with those aged under 18 years.

Region	*Unemployed Over 4 years 8 January 1987*	*Full-time education leavers 12 February 1987*	
		All ages	*Aged under 18 years*
South East (Including Greater London)	71,218 (39,965)	51,379 (33,586)	10,869 (5,904)
East Anglia	7,870	4,268	1,236
South West	17,842	10,438	3,051
West Midlands	54,920	32,766	8,806
East Midlands	22,960	4,583	4,379
Yorkshire and Humberside	38,172	30,914	9,787

Region	Unemployed Over 4 years 8 January 1987	Full-time education leavers 12 February 1987 All ages	Aged under 18 years
North West	65,436	41,663	10,825
North	34,877	20,347	6,073
Wales	22,699	15,044	4,266
Scotland	45,126	40,636	18,751
Northern Ireland	23,833	8,968	1,893
United Kingdom	404,953	271,006	79,936

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list, for each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom *(a)* the number unemployed in May 1979, in June 1983 and at the last date for which figures are available, *(b)* the long-term unemployed on these dates and *(c)* the percentage increase in unemployed and in long-term unemployed from both May 1979 and June 1983.

Mr. Lee: I am sending the hon. Member the available information which is also in the Library. The information relates to the number of unemployed claimants in each parliamentary constituency of Great Britain in June 1983 (not available for Northern Ireland constituencies) and of the United Kingdom on 12 February 1987. It is difficult to compare these figures directly because of seasonal factors and changes in the coverage of the data.

Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983. Analyses of unemployment by duration are not available for February or June: statistics for constituencies of Great Britain at July 1983 and January 1987 are available in the Library.

Mr. George asked the Paymaster General on what dates the measures taken to revise the method of computing the number of unemployed took effect; what were the measures; and how many were removed from the register.

Mr. Trippier: In recent years the following changes have been made to the compilation of the monthly unemployment figures:

	Date on which unadjusted count was first affected	Approximate average effect on the unadjusted count when the change occurred
Switch from count of registrants at jobcentres and careers offices to count of benefit claimants, following inroduction of voluntary registration at jobcentres.	11 November 1982	−190,000
Delay in compilation by two weeks to remove mistaken over-recording caused by late arrival of information about the status of claimants.	6 March 1986	−50,000

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of employees in 1981 and 1984, and any estimate he has for 1986, and the numbers employed in *(a)* manufacturing, *(b)* construction, *(c)* metal manufacturing, and *(d)* engineering and allied industries in each Parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *240-41*]: Constituency figures can be provided only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken and the most recent are for September 1981. The September 1984 small area census estimates are expected to become available shortly and a copy will be placed in the Library.

The currently available information from the 1981 census given in the table below relates only to numbers of people employed excluding self employed people, in constituencies in Great Britain. An industry breakdown and an estimate of the number of self-employed people is not available for each constituency.

The figures are therefore not a measure of the number of jobs in each constituency.

Employees in employment: Parliamentary constituencies: September 1981

Constituency	Number of employees
Barrow and Furness	36,500
Berwick-upon-Tweed	22,300
Bishop Auckland	33,300
City of Durham	38,400
Copeland	29,000
Easington	32,300
Hexham	20,500
Langbaurgh	15,300
North Durham	18,000
North West Durham	17,800
Penrith and the Border	25,800
Sedgefield	23,800
Wansbeck	29,800
Westmoreland and Lonsdale	28,000
Workington	23,500
Blaydon	27,200
Blyth Valley	19,900
Carlisle	35,500
Darlington	36,500
Gateshead East	29,200
Hartlepool	33,200
Houghton and Washington	28,500
Jarrow	21,300
Middlesbrough	47,400
Newcastle upon Tyne Central	33,300
Newcastle upon Tyne East	57,500
Newcastle upon Tyne North	18,100
Redcar	42,800
South Shields	29,100
Stockton North	41,700
Stockton South	26,400
Sunderland North	42,700
Sunderland South	24,800
Tyne Bridge	62,200
Tynemouth	28,200
Wallsend	37,800
Barnsley West and Penistone	27,400
Beverley	32,500
Booth Ferry	23,100
Bridlington	23,800
Brigg and Cleethorpes	28,400
Calder Valley	28,500
Colne Valley	23,000
Dewsbury	29,900
Doncaster North	24,400
Don Valley	21,700
Elmet	20,900
Harrogate	34,200

Constituency	Number of employees
Hemsworth	20,500
Keighley	29,300
Normanton	20,000
Pontefract and Castleford	37,700
Richmond (Yorks)	29,300
Rother Valley	20,400
Ryedale	26,400
Scarborough	28,700
Selby	32,200
Sheffield, Hallam	23,500
Sheffield, Hillsborough	25,300
Shipley	21,900
Skipton and Ripon	30,600
Wentworth	15,700
Barnsley Central	27,800
Barnsley East	23,200
Batley and Spen	31,800
Bradford North	38,900
Bradford South	24,300
Bradford West	62,300
Doncaster Central	55,400
Glanford and Scunthorpe	34,500
Great Grimsby	44,900
Halifax	45,200
Huddersfield	42,500
Kingston upon Hull East	25,100
Kingston upon Hull North	22,000
Kingston upon Hull West	62,400
Leeds Central	141,200
Leeds East	19,600
Leeds North East	13,700
Leeds North West	21,100
Leeds West	23,800
Morley and Leeds South	29,600
Pudsey	26,800
Rotherham	42,700
Sheffield, Attercliffe	32,800
Sheffield, Brightside	23,300
Sheffield Central	120,900
Sheffield, Heeley	15,600
Wakefield	50,100
York	59,100
Amber Valley	29,200
Ashfield	38,200
Bassetlaw	31,800
Blaby	27,200
Bolsover	20,000
Bosworth	33,000
Broxtowe	33,200
Corby	25,900
Daventry	23,200
East Lindsey	26,400
Erewash	28,500
Gainsborough and Horncastle	22,700
Gedling	20,700
Grantham	30,700
Harborough	29,700
High Peak	28,300
Holland with Boston	27,100
Kettering	26,700
Loughborough	36,300
Mansfield	31,800
Newark	31,800
North East Derbyshire	23,100
North West Leicestershire	33,300
Rushcliffe	24,500
Rutland and Melton	31,000
Sherwood	34,300
South Derbyshire	19,000
Stamford and Spalding	26,800
Wellingborough	32,600
West Derbyshire	33,700
Chesterfield	45,400
Derby North	31,600
Derby South	75,600
Leicester East	35,300

Constituency	Number of employees
Leicester South	72,900
Leicester West	52,100
Lincoln	46,200
Northampton North	25,200
Northampton South	58,200
Nottingham East	45,900
Nottingham North	18,700
Nottingham South	96,500
Bury St. Edmunds	40,800
Central Suffolk	24,200
Great Yarmouth	31,100
Huntingdon	27,200
Mid Norfolk	17,700
North East Cambridgeshire	25,200
North Norfolk	21,600
North West Norfolk	32,000
South East Cambridgeshire	22,900
South Norfolk	20,900
South Suffolk	31,600
South West Cambridgeshire	34,100
South West Norfolk	26,600
Suffolk Coastal	29,500
Waveney	35,400
Cambridge	52,700
Ipswich	52,500
Norwich North	21,500
Norwich South	72,400
Peterborough	59,600
Barking	25,100
Battersea	31,100
Beckenham	22,700
Bethnal Green and Stepney	55,200
Bexleyheath	14,400
Bow and Poplar	29,100
Brent East	28,700
Brent North	25,100
Brent South	54,900
Brentford and Isleworth	57,900
Carshalton and Wallington	23,500
Chelsea	54,100
Chingford	16,800
Chipping Barnet	26,000
Chislehurst	19,100
Croydon Central	75,800
Croydon North East	15,700
Croydon North West	32,900
Croydon South	19,000
Dagenham	45,900
Dulwich	17,300
Ealing, Acton	49,700
Ealing North	25,200
Ealing, Southall	42,200
Edmonton	25,300
Eltham	13,400
Enfield North	45,700
Enfield, Southgate	15,000
Erith and Crayford	22,600
Feltham and Heston	76,000
Finchley	20,200
Fulham	27,700
Greenwich	25,500
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	16,800
Hackney South and Shoreditch	64,400
Hammersmith	51,400
Hampstead and Highgate	28,900
Harrow East	39,300
Harrow West	16,400
Hayes and Harlington	48,500
Hendon North	25,400
Hendon South	25,000
Holborn and St. Pancras	179,600
Hornchurch	14,900
Hornsey and Wood Green	34,300
Ilford North	17,300
Ilford South	31,900
Islington North	31,800

Constituency	*Number of employees*
Maidstone	46,700
Medway	53,000
Mid Kent	18,600
Mid Sussex	32,000
Mole Valley	31,600
Newbury	37,500
New Forest	23,500
North Thanet	18,900
North West Hampshire	27,000
North West Surrey	36,300
Reading East	67,600
Reading West	21,800
Romsey and Waterside	28,300
Sevenoaks	27,100
Shoreham	24,300
South Thanet	24,600
South West Surrey	27,500
Tonbridge and Malling	39,400
Tunbridge Wells	36,300
Wealden	20,500
Winchester	50,400
Windsor and Maidenhead	43,000
Woking	33,900
Wokingham	25,200
Brighton, Kemptown	18,400
Brighton, Pavilion	49,700
Chertsey and Walton	38,100
Crawley	54,400
Eastbourne	34,000
Eastleigh	43,800
Epsom and Ewell	26,200
Esher	22,100
Gillingham	16,300
Gosport	22,800
Havant	30,500
Hove	27,700
Portsmouth, North	42,500
Portsmouth, South	56,300
Reigate	34,900
Slough	59,000
Southampton, Itchen	67,200
Southampton, Test	33,100
Spelthorne	42,700
Worthing	33,200
Bridgwater	28,600
Christchurch	23,300
Cirencester and Tewkesbury	37,500
Devizes	36,100
Falmouth and Camborne	23,900
Honiton	20,400
Islington South and Finsbury	81,600
Kensington	28,900
Kingston upon Thames	43,900
Lewisham, Deptford	26,300
Lewisham East	16,900
Lewisham West	18,500
Leyton	19,800
Mitcham and Morden	22,700
Newham North East	14,200
Newham North West	36,000
Newham South	24,600
Norwood	19,200
Old Bexley and Sidcup	18,400
Orpington	17,300
Peckham	25,100
Putney	26,300
Ravensbourne	24,500
Richmond and Barnes	24,100
Romford	30,300
Ruslip-Northwood	18,800
Southwark and Bermondsey	87,500
Streatham	21,700
Surbiton	18,100
Sutton and Cheam	26,200
The City of London and Westminster South	790,400
Tooting	23,600
Tottenham	26,900
Twickenham	30,500
Upminister	16,700
Uxbridge	41,600
Vauxhall	90,700
Walthamstow	22,100
Wanstead and Woodford	12,000
Westminster North	42,500
Wimbledon	36,700
Woolwich	28,600
Aylesbury	40,900
Banbury	33,100
Beaconsfield	28,100
Billericay	25,400
Braintree	34,900
Brentwood and Ongar	26,700
Buckingham	26,000
Chelmsford	45,900
Chesham and Amersham	23,700
Epping Forest	24,600
Harlow	41,100
Harwich	24,200
Henley	22,900
Hertford and Stortford	36,500
Northavon	25,700
North Cornwall	25,200
North Devon	25,800
North Dorset	18,600
North Wiltshire	31,200
St. Ives	20,700
Salisbury	35,500
Somerset and Frome	21,500
South Dorset	27,700
South East Cornwall	15,500
South Hams	20,100
Stroud	32,900
Taunton	36,800
Teignbridge	24,600
Tiverton	24,000
Torridge and West Devon	22,500
Truro	34,200
Wansdyke	24,400
Wells	27,300
Westbury	38,400
West Dorset	26,700
West Gloucestershire	30,800
Weston-Super-Mare	25,700
Woodspring	19,900
Yeovil	34,000
Bath	39,900
Bournemouth East	35,300
Bournemouth West	24,800
Bristol East	58,800
Bristol North West	49,200
Bristol South	34,300
Bristol West	65,600
Cheltenham	48,300
Exeter	54,300
Gloucester	50,800
Kingswood	26,600
Plymouth, Devonport	33,800
Plymouth, Drake	42,800
Plymouth, Sutton	16,500
Poole	40,300
Swindon	52,300
Torbay	30,200
Bromsgrove	19,700
Burton	39,700
Cannock and Burntwood	25,100
Hereford	34,000
Leominster	19,200
Ludlow	21,100
Meriden	17,300
Mid Staffordshire	32,400
Mid Worcestershire	37,300
North Shropshire	27,800

Constituency	Number of employees
North Warwickshire	30,500
Nuneaton	27,300
Rugby and Kenilworth	36,700
Shrewsbury and Atcham	35,900
South East Staffordshire	19,300
South Staffordshire	19,500
South Worcestershire	31,600
Stafford	46,600
Staffordshire Moorlands	24,900
Stratford-on-Avon	30,700
Warwick and Leamington	47,500
Wyre Forest	31,100
Aldridge-Brownhills	20,800
Birmingham, Edgbaston	43,000
Birmingham, Erdington	44,900
Birmingham, Hall Green	12,100
Birmingham, Hodge Hill	21,800
Birmingham, Ladywood	116,200
Birmingham, Northfield	37,300
Birmingham, Perry Barr	16,400
Birmingham, Selly Oak	34,800
Birmingham, Small Heath	87,100
Birmingham, Sparkbrook	42,100
Birmingham, Yardley	32,100
Coventry North East	19,000
Coventry North West	24,600
Coventry South East	74,400
Coventry South West	24,400
Dudley East	42,300
Dudley West	26,900
Halesowen and Stourbridge	35,800
Newcastle-under-Lyme	29,000
Solihull	43,300
Stoke-on-Trent Central	55,800
Stoke-on-Trent North	31,300
Stoke-on-Trent South	39,200
Sutton Coldfield	19,600
The Wrekin	36,900
Walsall North	30,000
Walsall South	53,800
Warley East	24,200
Warley West	32,100
West Bromwich East	34,300
West Bromwich West	43,400
Wolverhampton North East	36,000
Wolverhampton South East	40,100
Wolverhampton South West	31,000
Worcester	42,500
Bolton West	21,800
Chorley	26,600
City of Chester	41,400
Congleton	27,700
Crewe and Nantwich	39,400
Eddisbury	22,400
Ellesmere Port and Neston	46,200
Fylde	32,000
Halton	39,100
Hazel Grove	19,800
Heywood and Middleton	20,500
Knowsley North	29,600
Knowsley South	33,000
Lancaster	28,600
Littleborough and Saddleworth	18,200
Macclesfield	32,500
Makerfield	19,000
Morecambe and Lunesdale	18,200
Ribble Valley	24,300
South Ribble	34,800
Stalybridge and Hyde	29,000
Tatton	33,800
West Lancashire	29,600
Wirral South	23,800
Wirral West	8,800
Worsley	19,400
Wyre	23,000
Altrincham and Sale	25,600

Constituency	Number of employees
Ashton under Lyne	30,000
Birkenhead	44,300
Blackburn	43,700
Blackpool North	36,400
Blackpool South	17,000
Bolton North East	36,300
Bolton South East	35,400
Bootle	37,200
Burnley	39,700
Bury North	30,800
Bury South	20,700
Cheadle	20,000
Crosby	16,200
Davyhulme	34,300
Denton and Reddish	42,400
Eccles	36,800
Hyndburn	25,400
Leigh	29,800
Liverpool, Broadgreen	33,300
Liverpool, Garston	23,400
Liverpool, Mossley Hill	24,600
Liverpool, Riverside	125,700
Liverpool, Walton	32,700
Liverpool, West Derby	13,800
Manchester, Blackley	16,400
Manchester Central	214,500
Manchester, Gorton	11,800
Manchester, Withington	19,900
Manchester, Wythenshawe	25,900
Oldham Central and Royton	40,300
Oldham West	30,900
Pendle	29,200
Preston	63,500
Rochdale	36,000
Rossendale and Darwen	30,100
St. Helens North	16,000
St. Helens South	48,700
Salford East	40,600
Southport	24,000
Stockport	28,700
Stretford	47,900
Wallasey	17,100
Warrington North	48,200
Warrington South	26,800
Wigan	38,900
Aberavon	28,400
Alyn and Deeside	24,000
Blaenau Gwent	21,600
Brecon and Radnor	18,000
Bridgend	30,900
Carnarfon	16,600
Caerphilly	23,700
Carmarthen	22,200
Ceredigion and Pembroke North	19,900
Clwyd North West	24,800
Clwyd South West	17,000
Conwy	25,400
Cynon Valley	17,700
Delyn	20,700
Gower	15,000
Islwyn	17,700
Llanelli	27,700
Meirionnydd Nant Conwy	10,700
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	23,600
Monmouth	26,900
Montgomery	14,900
Neath	22,100
Newport East	16,100
Newport West	40,900
Ogmore	13,000
Pembroke	29,800
Pontypridd	36,200
Rhondda	16,300
Torfaen	27,100
Vale of Glamorgan	21,900
Wrexham	28,400

Constituency	Number of employees
Ynys Mon	16,700
Cardiff Central	68,800
Cardiff North	24,100
Cardiff South and Penarth	34,100
Cardiff West	18,700
Swansea East	24,400
Swansea West	49,500
Angus East	21,100
Argyll and Bute	20,500
Ayr	37,000
Banff and Buchan	25,000
Caithness and Sutherland	13,300
Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley	22,200
Central Fife	25,400
Clackmannan	18,500
Clydebank and Milngavie	15,600
Clydesdale	20,100
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	14,200
Cunninghame North	15,400
Cunninghame South	21,600
Dumbarton	24,100
Dumfries	30,200
Dunfermline East	23,500
Dunfermline West	23,900
East Kilbride	28,300
East Lothian	21,400
Eastwood	14,200
Falkirk East	25,700
Falkirk West	29,300
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	22,000
Gordon	34,300
Inverness Nairn and Lochaber	42,300
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	26,900
Kincardine and Deeside	13,300
Kirkcaldy	31,400
Linlithgow	22,600
Livingston	29,000
Midlothian	24,200
Moray	24,400
North East Fife	17,100
North Tayside	22,300
Orkney and Shetland	17,100
Perth and Kinross	33,500
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	18,000
Ross Cromarty and Skye	18,700
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	17,200
Stirling	30,500
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	18,200
Tweeddale Ettrick and Lauderdale	19,300
Western Isles	8,200
Aberdeen North	27,100
Aberdeen South	77,400
Dundee East	20,700
Dundee West	56,500
Edinburgh Central	113,400
Edinburgh East	17,800
Edinburgh Leith	40,500
Edinburgh Pentlands	18,000
Edinburgh South	18,700
Edinburgh West	21,300
Glasgow Cathcart	15,500
Glasgow Central	83,300
Glasgow Garscadden	12,600
Glasgow Govan	19,500
Glasgow Hillhead	120,200
Glasgow Maryhill	25,800
Glasgow Pollock	20,800
Glasgow Provan	9,000
Glasgow Rutherglen	17,300
Glasgow Shettleston	24,400
Glasgow Springburn	29,700
Green and Port Glasgow	33,200
Hamilton	27,800
Monklands East	17,100
Monklands West	19,500
Motherwell North	24,100
Motherwell South	30,600
Paisley North	52,100
Paisley South	16,000

Restart

Mr. Spearing asked the Paymaster General if he will review the rule that prevents a young person being employed under a Manpower Services Commission scheme who has gained the relevant skills under the restart programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no knowledge of such a rule.

Employment Census

Mr. Meacher asked the Paymaster General to what factors he attributes the delay in the availability to regional planning authorities of the county, borough and ward level data from the employment census 1984, known as ER2 data; and whether he is able to give a date on which those data will be made available to the greater Manchester district authorities.

Mr. Lee: The processing of the 1984 census estimates for small areas has been delayed as a result of the difficulties arising out of sampling in the census. However, it is hoped that these estimates will become available for release within about a month or so. My officials will be writing to local planning authorities later this month to advise them as to availability.

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what consideration is being given to, or what consultations have taken place on, the future of the labour force survey; and if he proposes to conduct it on a more frequent basis.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My officials continually assess the quality of the Department's statistical series and seek ways to improve them. I have taken no decision to alter the present frequency of the labour force survey.

Part-time Work

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General how many men and women he estimates to be in search of part-time work.

Mr. Lee: Preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1986 indicate that of those unemployed according to the definition conventionally used in measuring the labour force 72,000 men and 411,000 women were looking for work as part-time employees.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) what is his estimate for the United Kingdom for June 1983 and presently of *(a)* the number of married women or cohabitees who are out of work but not included in the benefit claimants monthly count and *(b)* the number of married men or cohabitees who are out of work but not included in the benefit claimants monthly count;

(2) how many persons over 60 years he estimates to be out of work but not required to register as unemployed to claim benefit for the following dates: June 1983, February 1986 and February 1987.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what new proposals he is considering, or what consultations are taking place, in relation to the accuracy of the monthly count of unemployed benefit claimants.

Mr. Lee: There are no such proposals being considered or consultations taking place.

Advertising

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what proportion of his Department's budget for advertising and promotion is spent on regional and local newspaper advertising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The proportion of the Department of Employment's advertising budget spent on regional and local newspaper advertising is 4·1 per cent.

Job Creation Programmes

Mr. George asked the Paymaster General how many people are engaged in the following special employment and training measures within the employment area covering the Walsall, South constituency. *(a)* community industry, *(b)* community programme, *(c)* the YTS, *(d)* the young workers scheme, *(e)* the job release scheme, *(f)* the job-splitting scheme and *(g)* the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to give a precise total figure because of the various basis on which local information is collated. The number of people participating in the following employment training and enterprise measures are:

Programme	*Date*	*Number*	*Area*
Community Programme	31 March 1987	2,148	Walsall Metropolitan Borough
Job Release Scheme	1 March 1987	148	Walsall Travel to Work Area
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	7 April 1987	812	Wolverhampton and Walsall Area
YTS	5 April 1987	2,688	Walsall Local Authority District

There are currently no people on community industry, the young workers scheme or the job splitting scheme in the Walsall area.

Availability-for-Work Test

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General how many people have been interviewed under the new availability-for-work procedures; how many have had their claims for benefit stopped, how many appeals have been made; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *37*]: Claimants to unemployment benefit have always been disallowed benefit by independent statutory adjudicating authorities, in accordance with long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments, where they are not available for work. There have therefore always been some interviews and some refusals of claims for as long as the national insurance system has operated since its establishment in its present form in 1947. If the hon. Member is asking for information about the position since we last modified the procedures and revised the form which has always been used to enforce the rules, the answer as at 27 February 1987 is as follows:

	Number
Numbers of claimants who have completed the latest version of the availability questionnaire (UB 671)	1,077,836
Number of claimants who have been disallowed benefit.	8,866

Information is not readily available about the number of appeals made against disallowance of benefit or their outcome.

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many people have been refused full or partial unemployment benefit as a result of information obtained by the new availability-for-work test in Leicester and the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *37*]: Ever since the national insurance system in its present form was set up in 1947, some claimants to unemployment benefit have always been disallowed benefit by independent statutory adjudicating authorities, in accordance with long standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments, where they are not available for work.

If the hon. and learned Member is asking how many claims have been disallowed in this way since we last modified the procedures and revised the form which has always been used to enforce the rules, the answer, as at 27 February 1987, is 78 claimants in Leicester and 8,866 claimants in Great Britain.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) when he expects to announce revised local unemployment rates, based on the employment figures contained in the 1984 census of employment;

(2) if he will publish the revised national and regional unemployment rates for each month since June 1983, based on his updated employment figures contained in the 1984 census of employment.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: Revised unemployment rates incorporating employment estimates which take account of the 1984 census of employment results will be published within the next two months. At that time revised national and regional rates will be available in the Library.

Bradford (Job Clubs)

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General how much the Manpower Services Commission is paying the Norfolk Gardens hotel in Bradford to establish a job club; how many job clubs have been established in the Bradford district in private premises and at what cost in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Nine job clubs had been opened in the Bradford metropolitan district by 31 March as part of the Manpower Services Commission's expansion to 1,000 job clubs nationally. Two of these job clubs, run by MSC staff, are temporarily located in accommodation rented from the Norfolk Gardens hotel, pending a move to permanent premises. Negotiations for such premises are at an advanced stage.

In addition, seven job clubs are run on the commission's behalf by external organisations.

I regret that information about individual financial and contracting arrangements is confidential, but the average cost of job clubs in the Bradford metropolitan district is £18,600 per annum.

ENERGY

Pollution

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if any experiments on the introduction of metallic elements into the flame areas of boilers using untreated fuel oil in power stations in order to reduce the formation of acidic gases have been conducted by the Central Electricity Generating Board or by any body for which he is responsible;

(2) what has been the outcome of experiments at the Coal Research Establishment on the addition of anti-fouling additives in terms of the quantity of oxides of nitrogen produced by combustion in coal-fired boilers of the kind used in power stations;

(3) if consideration has been given to the treatment of fuels prior to combustion in power stations as a means of inhibiting acid rain.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board maintains a wide ranging programme of research into methods of reducing acid emissions from power stations including the treatment of fuels prior to combustion. I understand that the evidence to date does not support the use of such techniques for emission control at the board's plant. I also understand that the introduction of metal compounds into the flame area of oil fired boilers has been found to be effective as a means of reducing acid dewpoint corrosion in the plant and the formation of acid smuts but not as a means of reducing emissions of sulphur and nitrogen oxides.

British Coal informs me that the coal research establishment has not undertaken any tests on the effect of anti-fouling additives in boilers of the type used in a large modern power plant. Such tests are under way for industrial boilers but the results, in terms of the quantity of oxides of nitrogen emitted, have not been promising.

Coal Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) pursuant to his answer of 6 April, *Official Report*, column 6, if he will take steps to produce details of all fatal accidents which have occurred in the coal industry for the year 1986-87, broken down according to coalfield areas, as soon as possible;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 6 April, *Official Report*, column 7, if he will take steps to produce details of all serious accidents which have occurred in the coal industry for the full year 1986-87, broken down according to coalfield areas, as soon as possible.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall publish the information requested when it becomes available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Accommodation Agencies

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Attorney-General for each year since 1975, *(a)* how many accommodation agencies have had summonses issued against them under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, *(b)* how many accommodation agencies have been successfully prosecuted under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, *(c)* how many directors of accommodation agencies have had summonses issued against them under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953 and *(d)* how many directors of accommodation agencies have been successfully prosecuted under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

Information in the form requested is not available. The information readily available to me, which may be incomplete, is given in the following table:

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts for offences under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953
England and Wales 1975-85: Number of defendants

Year	*Proceeded against*	*Found guilty*
1975	2	2
1976	2	2
1977	9	9
1978	2	2
1979	—	—
1980	4	4
1981	3	1
1982	4	3
1983	4	3
1984	5	2
1985	5	2

Licensed Conveyancers

Mr. Harris asked the Attorney-General what information the Lord Chancellor has as to the number of licensed conveyancers who have so far registered with the Council for Licensed Conveyancers under the transitional arrangements and as to the number of applications for registration.

The Attorney-General: Two hundred and forty five notices of intention to apply for a licence have been received by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers. The council cannot issue licences until the relevant statutory provisions comes into force.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Self-Employed Persons

Ms. Clare Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of self-employed in each tax band in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information from the survey of personal incomes is as follows:

Single people and married couples liable to tax with main source self employment income

thousands

Marginal rate of tax[1] *(per cent.)*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
25	[2]257	..	..	..	..	..
30	[2]1,120	1,340	1,380	1,460	1,590	1,670
40	44	42	53	54	47	55
45	38	35	43	42	46	51
50	29	31	36	33	36	35
55	13	13	18	17	15	16
60	17	23	27	26	23	24
Total	1,520	1,490	1,550	1,630	1,760	1,850

[1] Highest rate of income tax on total income (including investment income) excluding investment income surcharge.
[2] Figures for 1979-80 are on a slightly different basis from that for later years. As a result, the total of those liable at 25 and 30 per cent. may be understated relative to later years by about 20,000. Differences for higher rates are negligible.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Bright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why investment trust companies are excluded from participating in the provision of personal equity plans.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The prime aim of the personal equity plan is to encourage direct investment in British companies. Holdings of investment trusts in personal equity plans are allowed up to £420 a year or 25 per cent. of investors' annual subscriptions, whichever is the higher. The purpose of this limit is to enable small investors to have a reasonable spread of risk, without undermining the main objective of the scheme. Though investment trusts are companies under law, they cannot provide a sufficiently close relationship between the investor and the companies in which the trust invests. Also, many investment trusts have large holdings in foreign companies and gilts.

Reliefs and Allowances

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will show tax and national insurance in 1987-88 as a proportion of earnings, together with a breakdown of the reliefs and allowances applicable in the cases of a married man with earnings of £100,000 per annum, making an annual investment of £40,000 from his earnings under the business expansion scheme and claiming tax relief on *(a)* a mortgage loan of £30,000, assuming a monthly interest payment of £281·25, *(b)* the maximum contribution to a personal pension scheme from 4 January 1988, having no contracted-out employer's scheme prior to that date, *(c)* a life insurance policy taken out before 13 March 1984 and with an annual premium of £1,000 and *(d)* the maximum monthly tax-free investment into a personal equity plan;

(2) if he will show tax and national insurance in 1987-88 as a proportion of earnings together with a breakdown of the reliefs and allowances applicable in the case of a married man with earnings of £30,000 per annum, and making an annual investment from his earnings of £5,000 under the business expansion scheme as well as claiming tax relief on *(a)* a mortgage loan of £30,000, assuming a monthly interest payment of £281·25, *(b)* the maximum contribution to a personal pension scheme from 4 January 1988, having no contracted-out employer's scheme prior to that date, *(c)* a life insurance policy taken out before 13 March 1984 and with an annual premium of £200 and *(d)* the maximum monthly tax-free investment into a personal equity plan;

(3) if he will show tax and national insurance in 1987-88 as a proportion of earnings together with a breakdown of the reliefs and allowances applicable in the cases of *(a)* a married man with earnings of £100,000 per annum, *(b)* a married man on the level of average male earnings assumed for 1987 and *(c)* a single person earning £100 per week.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Leeds-Bradford Airport (Customs Clearance)

Mr. Madden asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from Freight Forwarders in the Leeds-Bradford area about its proposals to introduce a system of customs clearance by direct computer link covering Leeds-Bradford Airport and Leeds Containers base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received proposing the development of a customs and excise depot at the Leeds-Bradford Airport.

Mr. Peter Brooke: I shall let the hon. Members have replies as soon as possible.

Pensions

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, following his Budget proposals, any of the pension rights secured by additional voluntary

contributions can be commuted into a tax-free lump sum, whether any restrictions will apply only to contributions paid after 17 March 1987 regardless of when the arrangements to pay such contributions was entered into; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1987, c. 108]: I regret the delay in replying. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given in my written reply on 7 April 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) at columns *164-65*.

Tax Exemption

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the rate of tax payable in the current financial year on *(a)* interest and *(b)* dividends paid to overseas holders of United Kingdom securities; and if he will provide a forecast of the yield in each case together with his estimate of the amount of tax forgone by virtue of exemption granted in the case of interest paid on certain government stocks;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the saving to the Exchequer in 1987-88 of ending the tax exemption on the interest paid on gilt-edged securities to overseas residents.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. 213]: The rate at which tax is payable on interest paid to non-resident holders of United Kingdom securities will depend on the nature of the security and the terms of any double taxation agreement between the United Kingdom and the country of residence of the recipient. Interest on certain British Government securities is not liable to income tax. Under the imputation system of corporation tax, the shareholders' liability to basic rate income tax on dividends paid by United Kingdom companies is regarded as met by the advance corporation tax payable by the company in respect of the distributions made by it. If, under the terms of a double taxation agreement a non-resident recipient is entitled to a tax credit, the aggregate of the dividend and the tax credit is taxed at the restricted rate specified in the agreement.

The information required to forecast the tax yield from interest paid to overseas holders of United Kingdom securities is not available. The yield from the taxation of dividends paid to overseas holders of United Kingdom securities and their accompanying tax credits was approximately £150 million in 1985-86, the latest year for which this information is available.

The estimated reduction in tax liabilities in 1986-87 resulting from the exemption for overseas holders of British Government securities is £350 million. A figure for 1987-88 is not available.

Tax and National Insurance

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to 1987-88 the information on tax and national insurance contributions provided in his reply of 30 January to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, columns *413-16*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *216*]: The following table shows *(a)* income tax plus national insurance contributions less child benefit at current prices and *(b)* income tax plus national insurance contributions less child benefit as a percentage of gross income. The calculations assume that the taxpayer has no reliefs other than the appropriate personal allowances and that national insurance contributions are at the contracted-in rate. Average earnings are those for full time males and part-time females paid at adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence. Figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are provisional.

Income tax plus national insurance contributions[1]
Multiples of average earnings

	½		¾		1		5		10	
	(a) £ per week	*(b)* Per cent.	*(a)* £ per week	*(b)* Per cent.	*(a)* £ per week	*(b)* Per cent.	*(a)* £ per week	*(b)* Per cent.	*(a)* £ per week	*(b)* Per cent.
Single person										
1978-79	10·92	23·5	17·03	27·5	29·25	31·5	242·17	52·2	625·97	67·5
1985-86	25·99	26·2	38·89	29·4	64·69	32·6	451·12	45·5	1,046·62	52·7
1986-87	27·52	25·8	41·04	28·8	68·07	31·9	487·04	45·6	1,127·24	52·8
1987-88	28·32	24·9	41·96	27·7	62·94	30·5	520·05	45·8	1,201·95	52·9
Married couple with part-time working spouse										
1978-79	7·43	12·5	13·54	17·1	29·28	24·6	285·80	48·0	726·82	61·1
1985-86	18·77	15·0	31·68	19·0	62·89	25·1	539·41	43·1	1,235·19	49·3
1986-87	20·16	15·0	33·68	18·8	66·62	24·8	579·85	43·1	1,328·71	49·4
1987-88	21·21	14·8	36·82	19·3	68·51	23·9	614·06	42·9	1,412·89	49·3
Married couple plus two children[2] *with part-time working spouse*										
1978-79	1·13	1·9	7·13	9·0	22·87	19·2	277·77	46·7	718·49	60·4
1985-86	4·97	4·0	17·88	10·7	49·09	19·6	525·61	42·0	1,221·39	48·8
1986-87	6·02	4·5	19·54	10·9	52·48	19·5	565·71	42·0	1,314·57	48·9
1987-88	6·71	4·7	22·32	11·7	54·01	18·8	599·56	41·8	1,398·39	48·8

[1] Less child benefit where appropriate.
[2] Both under 11.

Allowances

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the cost to the Exchequer of an increase of £100 in each of the allowances at the standard rate of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. 76]: The estimated direct revenue costs in a full year at 1987-88 income levels for each of the main personal allowances are as follows. The calculation assumes that the increase in each allowance would reduce liability at the basic rate of tax only.

Allowance	*Cost at 1987-88 income levels £ millions*
Single person's	250
Wife's earned income	105
Married man's	275
Additional personal	12
Widow's bereavement	2
Married age (taxpayers aged 65 to 79)	22
Married age (taxpayers aged 80 and over)	4
Single age (taxpayers aged 65 to 79)	24
Single age (taxpayers aged 80 and over)	4

Pension Schemes (Approvals)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the superannuation funds office has returned to employers' pension schemes submitted to them for approval before Budget day.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: I assume my hon. Friend has in mind the decision of the Inland Revenue superannuation funds office not to give formal tax approval to occupational pension schemes until the Finance Bill has received Royal Assent. This is because the tax reform package for pensions announced in the Budget requires pension schemes to have rules which conform with the Budget proposals and, until the Finance Bill is enacted, the precise form of these rules cannot be known. However, schemes established before Royal Assent should generally benefit from the usual tax reliefs on a provisional basis until such time as they can finalise their rules and obtain approval.

Privatisation

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's policy towards the eventual privatisation of all nationalised industries and public corporations.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: It is the Government's policy to privatise most of the remaining state-owned sector of industry in the rest of this Parliament and the next.

TRANSPORT

Light Dues

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the increase in constant price terms of light dues for shipping for the years 1970-71, 1974-75, 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The table shows, for each financial year since 1970-71, the percentage difference in constant price terms between the 1987-88 light dues rates and the rates in earlier years. In calculating these differences the latest Treasury GDP deflators have been used:

	Percentage
1970-71	19·9
1971-72	12·5
1972-73	21·1
1973-74	23·3
1974-75	16·6
1975-76	[1]33·7
1976-77	24·8
1977-78	26·2
1978-79	18·3
1979-80	4·2
1980-81	8·0
1981-82	19·1
1982-83	13·0
1983-84	0·6
1984-85	5·2
1985-86	11·8
1986-87	8·8
1987-88	

[1] This increase took effect on 26 September 1975 and subsumed a smaller increase effective from 1 April 1975.

Coaches (Vehicle Excise Duty)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the net yield of payments made by the express coach service sector through vehicle excise duty and fuel duty, taking into account the rebate which is claimed by operators, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. David Mitchell: Vehicle excise duty and fuel duty receipts are not collected separately for the express coach service sector.

British Transport Police

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to increase the manpower available to British Transport police in the South Wales area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for the railways board and the British Transport police. I understand that they have no immediate plans to increase police manpower in South Wales, but the situation is under review.

Trains (Vandalism)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has of the number of incidents of vandalism on late evening trains in South Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from the British Transport Police that in the first 3 months of 1987 there have been 14 reported offences involving criminal damage on late evening trains in South Wales.

Petroleum (Cetane Value)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on proposals to reduce the cetane value in petroleum products and on the effect of this on the environment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following discussions with Government Departments and the industries concerned proposals have been made by the British Standards Institution to amend the standard for diesel fuel for road vehicles BS 2869. The proposals follow changes in the

quality of crude oil available, the mix of oil products in demand and the technical possibilities for controlling various characteristics of diesel fuel. The minimum cetane number would be reduced from 50 CN to 48 CN, a figure nearer the European average. It is expected that this would result in marginal increases in smoke and noise emission from some engines. On the other hand new density limits, a stability requirement and tighter viscosity and distillation characteristics would be introduced to act as a safeguard against diesel fuel quality declining in other respects. On balance we believe this package of changes will best secure the needs of industry and the protection of the environment.

Railways (Consultative Committees)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance he has issued to British Rail management concerning the making of representations by it about transport consultative committee appointments.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have neither issued any guidance to, nor received any representations from, British Rail on TUCC appointments. TUCC appointments are, in any case, entirely a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Roads (Safety)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department is seeking low-cost safety measures for implementation on roads taken over from the former Greater London council.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. A top priority on taking over these roads was to review their safety record. Our current programme will put in remedial schemes at the rate of two a week right across the London trunk road network throughout the coming year. This is part of our expanding programme of low-cost accident prevention measures which will pay high dividends in terms of lives saved.

Borough Traffic Orders

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the rate of clearance of borough traffic orders by his Department; and how it compares with the clearance rate by the former Greater London council.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An object of giving boroughs their own traffic management powers was to cut out wasteful delays. Boroughs have been making good use of their new freedom to get ahead speedily with local schemes to handle traffic more effectively and safely. Where orders have to come to this Department, they are cleared within a maximum of one month and generally far less. This compares favourably with the many months some GLC orders used to take.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals have been made by consultants concerning the operation of the Woolwich free ferry; what changes in hours of service are envisaged; what effects there would be on manpower; and what would be the estimated savings in one year in actual and percentage terms.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At a meeting with me yesterday afternoon, Greenwich council undertook to complete its input to the consultants final report as quickly as possible. I hope to have the consultants' proposals soon.

Vehicle Passengers (Risks)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the relative risk of accident and injury for passengers travelling in *(a)* minibuses *(b)* motor caravans and *(c)* passenger service vehicles and coaches.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Relative injury-rates for these categories are not available, because: (i) the STATS 19 accident report form does not distinguish between *(a)* and *(b)*; and (ii) traffic figures giving vehicle kilometres of exposure include *(b)* with traffic, and *(a)* with either car traffic or with *(c)*.

In plain English: not much.

Minibuses (Safety)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to lay down standards for the safety of minibuses equivalent to that required for the occupants of other forms of fare-paying passenger transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Each class of vehicle used for fare paying passenger transport is subject to appropriate safety standards which have regard to the particular constructional characteristics of that class. The requirements for minibuses are set out in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate any studies to monitor the effect of increased minibus passenger travel on the rate of accidents involving minibuses.

Mr. David Mitchell: Accidents involving minibuses are monitored through the accident reporting system, and I shall watch the situation carefully.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to amend STATS 19 forms to allow a distinction to be made between minibus and motor car accidents as part of the process of monitoring the effects of bus-deregulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The existing STATS 19 form distinguishes between (i) cars, (ii) minibuses-motor-caravans, and (iii) larger buses. There is no distinction under (ii) between private motor caravans and minibuses running on public services. We hope to obtain agreement from the Association of Chief Police Officers to record seating capacity of type (ii) vehicles. This should help in the monitoring of bus-deregulation.

Minibuses (Passenger Mileage)

127. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** : asked the Secretary of State for Transport, what information he has about minibus passenger mileage for 1985; and what information he proposes to collect to facilitate monitoring of the effects of bus de-regulation.

Mr. David Mitchell: No separate information is available for minibus passenger mileage for 1985. The Department has a programme for monitoring the effects of bus deregulation covering national data, area and case studies. The first report was published in January of this year and a further report is expected in the summer which will include general information on the development of minibus services in the study areas.

DEFENCE

Scottish Universities (Contracts)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts his Department has placed with each Scottish university in the past three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Research agreements and contracts have been placed by MOD with a wide range of Scottish universities as follows.

	Number
1984	10
1985	23
1986	29

It is for the universities concerned to confirm their individual involvement.

Project Zircon

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in preparing his forthcoming defence White Paper, he will make it his policy to identify separately expenditure on project Zircon; and if he will provide similar information for previous years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

AWACS

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department intends to build hardened shelters for United Kingdom-based airborne warning and control system aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has no intention to build hardened shelters for United Kingdom-based airborne warning and control system aircraft.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether airborne warning and control system aircraft will be able to refuel from Victor K2 tankers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. All Victor K2 tankers are fitted with an E-3 compatible refuelling system.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether airborne warning and control system aircraft will be able to refuel from VC10 K1 tankers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no VC10 K1 aircraft in service. However, the United Kingdom's VC10 K2 and VC10 K3 tanker fleet will be compatible with the United Kingdom E-3 force.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether airborne warning and control systems aircraft will be able to refuel from Tristar Q1 tankers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence for how many hours airborne warning and control system aircraft will be able to remain on station with air-to-air refuelling.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to reveal details of operational capabilities.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence how long the airborne warning and control system mission system avionics can be kept in operation in the air without need for maintenance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to reveal details of operational capabilities. However, most elements of the mission system are duplicated providing an automatic in-flight redundancy thereby ensuring a high degree of efficiency in the MSA.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many hours Royal Air Force airborne warning and control system aircraft will be able to stay on station over the Faroes/Iceland area of the North sea without air-to-air refulling.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to reveal details of operational capabilities.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the vulnerability of Royal Air Force advanced warning and control system aircraft on the ground in the event of war.

Mr. Stanley: I will write to the right hon. Gentleman.

Tanker Aircraft

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many squadrons of tanker aircraft are currently in Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Stanley: Three.

Air-to-Air Refuelling

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions his Department has had with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies on air-to-air refuelling capability.

Mr. Stanley: Recent discussions have been held with the United States on air-to-air refuelling interoperability. This and other aspects of air-to-air refuelling have been, and will be, under discussion in various NATO fora.

Sea Wolf

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the reason for the delay in awarding the Sea Wolf missile contracts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A review of Sea Wolf missile stocks and future requirements is currently underway. On successful completion of this review a decision will be made on the timing of any further contract awards.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when orders will be placed for Sea Wolf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Many individual orders have been placed under under the Sea Wolf programme since its inception in the 1970s. It is not possible to be precise about the timing of further such orders.

Invincible Class Vessels (Refurbishment)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the refurbishment of ships in the Invincible class over the next three years; and what timetable exists for the undertaking of the necessary work.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Invincible is currently undergoing a refit at Devonport dockyard. For all vessels of the class, maintenance in dock will be undertaken at approximately six-monthly intervals. Refit plans are under review.

Atomic Weapon Trials, Australia

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the history of the British atomic weapons trials in Australia, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The book "A Very Special Relationship" provides a factual account of the British atomic weapon trials in Australia based mainly on a large volume of contemporary material, and also evidence provided during the inquiries of the Australian Royal Commission. It has been written by Lorna Arnold, a research assistant under Professor Margaret Gowing at the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. I have placed a copy in the Library today.

Tactical Missile System

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about United Kingdom involvement in plans for a new tactical missile system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987 c. *304*]: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Defence Budget

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of state for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 4 March 1987, *Official Report*, column *602*, why the savings made in his budget during 1986-87 are not expected for 1987-88; what criteria he uses for the slection of priorities; what assessment he has made of the implications for progress towards the Government's energy efficiency targets of the reduction in the budget for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *88*.]: The savings in the 1986-87 budget arose on fuel Votes as a result of engergy efficiency measures previously introduced. The fuel Votes have now been reduced to reflect the lower and more efficient consumption levels.

Energy efficiency measures are normally funded from works budgets and may at times have to give way to building projects which operationally are of greater urgency. Such building projects will increase energy efficiency on the defence estate over and above the measures for which funds have been specifically allocated, although the cost is not separately identifiable.

Within the Government's overall energy efficiency initiative the Ministry of Defence has set a target of a 25 per cent. reduction in usage of non-operational energy over the 5 year period 1986-87 to 1990-91. The reduction in the 1987-88 budget should not prejudice achievement of this target.

Greenham Common (Vehicle Transfer)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to why 10 Dodge Ram support vehicles were transferred from Greenham common to Alconbury on 1 April; and to what use they will be put.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c. *172*.]: I am informed by the United States authorities that they are not aware of any transfer of USAF Dodge Ram vehicles from RAF Greenham Common to RAF Alconbury on 1 April.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the purpose for which United States service personnel were transferred from Greenham common to Alconbury on 1st April.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 April 1987, c. *172*.]: I am informed by the United States authorities that they are not aware of any transfer of United States service personnel from RAF Greenham common to RAF Alconbury on 1 April.

Publications

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much has been spent by his Department in each of the past five years on publications for: *(a)* free distribution and *(b)* sale under £1;

(2) what has been the total cost of producing publications on aspects of Her Majesty's Government's defence policies in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 April 1987]: In the time available it is not possible to produce figures in the precise form requested. or for a full five-year period. However, all material produced on public relations Votes is free of charge and in the last three financial years expenditure was as follows:

	£
1984-85	340,125
1985-86	269,440
1996-87	[1]408,273

[1] Forecast of outturn.

In addition the MOD produces considerable amounts of material in support of recruitment to the armed forces. Figures over the same period are, as follows:

	£
1984-85	1,559,000
1985-86	1,345,000
1986-87	1,302,000

The MOD produces a wide range of material for sale both through HMSO, the Crown Publishers, and on a repayment basis through the single service forms and publications stores. The amounts spent in each of the past five years on publications for sale at less than £1, and on aspects of defence policies separately from other MOD publications, cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take to ensure that the

introduction of the community charge does not deter students from outside Scotland applying to take courses at Scottish universities.

Mr. Ancram: My noble Friend the Minister of State at the Scottish Office agreed, during discussion of the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc., (Scotland) Bill at Committee Stage in the House of Lords on Thursday 2 April, to consider the position of students, including students from outside Scotland, under the proposals to replace domestic rates by a system of community charges. I do not however consider that the proposals will represent a significant disincentive to students from outside Scotland undertaking university and college courses in Scotland.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* how many people under the age of 25 years *(a)* are unemployed and *(b)* have been unemployed for more than six months in (i) Glasgow, Central and (ii) the whole of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The information requested, for the latest available date, is given in the table:

Unemployed claimants aged under 25 years as at 8 January 1987

	Unemployed over 6 months	*Total*
Glasgow Central parliamentary constituency	1,545	2,825
Scotland	64,906	142,439

Private Medicine (Glasgow)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list how many general practitioners are carrying out private work in health centres in the Glasgow area; and what is the proportion of private to Health Service general practice care in the Greater Glasgow health board area.

Mr. John MacKay: I understand that the number of general practitioners authorised to undertake private practice in health centres in the area of the Greater Glasgow health board was 156 at the end of March 1987. Information about the proportion of private to Health Service general practice in the board's area is not available centrally.

Education (Expenditure)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on education in each of the past 10 years in cash and constant price terms.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is set out in the table:

Total expenditure on education within Secretary of State for Scotland's responsibility

£ million

Financial year	*Cash*	*Constant price[1] terms*
1976-77	754	1,796
1977-78	805	1,684
1978-79	901	1,703
1979-80	1,032	1,669
1980-81	1,273	1,735
1981-82	1,432	1,778
1982-83	1,503	1,740
1983-84	1,575	1,745
1984-85	1,616	1,717
1985-86[2]	1,680	1,680

[1] Calculated by applying GDP deflator, base year 1985-86.
[2] Provisional outturn figure based on most recent information from local authorities.

Education (Statistics)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of Scotland's gross domestic product was spent on education in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: The information, in respect of the education expenditure within my right hon. and learned Friend's responsibility is set out in the table below:

	Per cent.
1981	7·9
1982	7·5
1983	7·2
[1]1984	7·0
[1]1985	6·6

[1] Figures are provisional.

Notes:

(1) GDP figures used are at factor cost by calendar year, expenditure figures are for financial years, ie the 1981 percentage is expenditure in 1981-82 as a percentage of GDP in 1981.

(2) The average cash growth in GDP for the years quoted was 8·6 per cent., while the average cash growth in education spending was 4·1 per cent., hence the latter declines as a percentage of the former.

Tourism

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds were made available in cash and real terms to the Scottish tourist board in the years 1978-79 and 1982-83; and how much has been provided for the year ahead.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 2 March at column *485*.

Children (Health and Development)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence from surveys his Department has about the relative standard of health and development of children of the unemployed compared with the rest of the population.

Mr. John MacKay: No surveys designed to determine the existence of any relationship between child health and development and parental unemployment have been carried out in Scotland.

Cigarette Smoking

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the incidence of cigarette smoking by percentage by social class in Scotland at the latest date and 10 years previously.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Prevalence of cigarette smoking by socio-economic group, Scotland 1974 and 1984

Socio-Economic Group	Percentage Smoking Cigarettes Both Sexes	
	1974	1984
Professional	34	25
Employers and Managers	41	32
Intermediate and junior non-manual	41	30
Skilled manual and own account non-professional	52	45
Semi-skilled manual and personal service	55	47
Unskilled manual	52	41
Total	48	39

Source: General Household Survey unpublished tables.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of *(a)* stillbirths, *(b)* perinatal deaths, *(c)* neonatal deaths, *(d)* postneonatal deaths and *(e)* infant deaths per 1,000 total births in Dundee and Tayside in the latest year, by social class of the father.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is:

Births, Stillbirths and Infant Deaths by Social Class of Father, Tayside Region, 1985 (rates per 1,000 births)

	I	II	III N	III M	IV	V
Stillbirths[1]	2·9	2·6	3·9	3·9	8·5	3·7
Perinatal[1]	8·8	5·2	7·9	5·5	10·3	3·7
Neonatal	8·9	2·6	3·9	2·4	5·2	—
Postneonatal	3·0	1·3	5·9	1·6	3·4	—
Infant Deaths	11·8	3·9	9·9	4·0	8·6	—

[1] Rate per 1,000 live and still births.

Births, Stillbirths, and Infant Deaths by Social Class of Father, Dundee District, 1985 (Rates per 1,000 births)

	I	II	III N	III M	IV	V
Stillbirths[1]	6·3	7·1	5·1	3·4	4·0	5·9
Perinatal[1]	12·7	7·1	10·2	3·4	4·0	5·9
Neonatal	12·7	—	5·1	1·7	—	—
Postneonatal	—	3·6	10·3	—	—	—
Infant Deaths	12·7	3·6	15·4	1·7	—	—

[1] Rate per 1,000 live and still births.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the standardised mortality rates of men of working age by social class in Dundee and Tayside at the latest available date or period.

Mr. John MacKay: Information on standardised mortality ratios by social class for men aged 20-64 for Tayside for the period 1979-83 is as follows. The ratios are based on information from death registrations and the 1981 Census, and are subject to error because of different methods of collecting information on occupation. Information for Dundee is not available.

Standardised mortality ratios for men aged 20-64, by social class, Tayside Region, 1979-83

Social Class	Standardised Mortality Ratio
I	60
II	67
III N	90
III M	87
IV	96
V	139

Note:
The standardised mortality ratio for men in the total of all social classes in Great Britain is 100.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the standardised mortality rate for death by the following category in Scotland at the latest available date or period for manual and non-manual groups: *(a)* all causes, *(b)* lung cancer, *(c)* coronary heart disease and *(d)* cerebro-vascular disease.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest information is contained in "Mortality Differentials in Scotland and England and Wales in Manual/Non-Manual Occupational Groups 1969-73 to 1979-83" which was published in the vital statistics return to the Registrar General for Scotland, Weeks 41-44, 1986. A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the standardised mortality rate of women aged 20 to 59 years by social class in Dundee and Tayside at the latest available date or period.

Mr. John MacKay: Information on standardised mortality ratios by social class for women aged 20-64 for Tayside for the period 1979-83 is as follows. The ratios are based on information from death registrations and the 1981 Census, and are subject to error because of different methods of collecting information on occupation. Information for Dundee is not available.

Standardised mortality ratios for women aged 20-64, by social class, Tayside Region, 1979-83

Social Class	Standardised Mortality Ratio
I	61
II	71
III N	67
III M	84
IV	92
V	107

Note: The standardised mortality ratio for women in the total of all social classes in Great Britain is 100.

Radioactive Waste (Storage)

Mr. Home Roberston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if any sites in East Lothian have been considered for the storage of low level radio active waste material; and if any such sites are being considered for the storage of intermediate level radioactive waste material.

Mr. Ancram: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the permanent disposal of waste. The selection of sites for geological investigation as a possible shallow burial repository for the disposal of low level waste is a matter for UK NIREX Ltd. Neither the Government nor NIREX consider that it would be appropriate to release details of all the sites considered before the four currently under investigation in England were selected.

NIREX are currently considering possible options for the disposal of intermediate level waste, including deep burial in a repository on land, tunnelling beneath the seabed from the shore and disposal into the seabed from a sea-based rig. A number of alternative sites will be considered by NIREX. At this stage, no area has been ruled out.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional staff his Department is making available to support the advisory committee on salmon stocks.

Mr. John McKay: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is in the process of recruiting an additional principal scientific officer to assist in the consideration of scientific matters raised by the salmon advisory committee. Existing scientific staff will also contribute to that work. In addition, the Department provides the committee's deputy secretary from existing staff resources.

Grant Assistance

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations whose applications for grant assistance for 1987-88 under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 have been approved; and what are the sums to be made available to those organisations.

Mr. John MacKay: Grants available under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 for the financial year ending 31 March 1988 are as follows:

	£
National Library of Scotland	4,132,000
National Museums of Scotland	5,017,000
National Galleries of Scotland	3,417,000
Scottish Museums Council	440,000
Royal Society of Edinburgh	273,000
Royal Scottish Geographical Society	3,000
Cultural Organisations formerly grant-aided under the Further Education (Scotland) Regulations 1959	
National Youth Orchestra of Scotland	23,000
Scottish Youth Theatre	39,500
Scottish Community Drama Association	24,000
Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association	5,000
Scottish Council for Dance	4,000
An Comunn Gaidhealach	35,000
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	40,000
Comunn na Gaidhlig	45,000
Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich	32,000

Orkney and Shetland

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *716*, if he will visit Orkney and Shetland during the course of the Easter recess.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Hip and Knee Joint Operations

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the numbers waiting for *(a)* hip joint and *(b)* knee joint operations in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the average waiting time for knee and hip joint replacement operations; and what are the authorities which have the longest waiting times.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available in precisely the form requested. The table gives the mean waiting time (in days) for those who received treatment in 1985 for knee and hip joint replacement after admission from the waiting list and were discharged in that year.

Mean Wait (days)

Health board	Knee replacement	Hip replacement
Argyll and Clyde	200	206
Ayrshire and Arran	221	166
Borders	83	114
Dumfries and Galloway	176	191
Fife	144	213
Forth Valley	189	275
Grampian	158	303
Greater Glasgow	135	128
Highland	400	323
Lanarkshire	154	144
Lothian	379	203
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	317	283
Western Isles	—	—
Scotland	219	202

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons are waiting for kidney dialysis treatment in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: All patients referred for treatment for end-stage renal failure who are considered likely to benefit from renal dialysis are receiving appropriate treatment, and there are no waiting lists.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to lay a commencement order bringing sections 4, 8(1), 9 and 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: As indicated in my written reply of 10 February 1987 to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) at columns *67-8* my right hon. and learned Friend hopes to implement a number of provisions in the Act with relatively slight resource implications in the course of 1987-88 including those referred to in the question. Consultations have taken place with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities only very recently and he expects to indicate the timing he proposes immediately following the Easter recess.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the Scottish Development Agency's annual budget for all promotional purposes for each of the last five years; and what percentage of its total budget these figures represent;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report*, the total value of work of all kinds put out to consultants by the Scottish Development Agency for each of the last five years, the name of each company and the value of each contract awarded; whether the contract was awarded on the basis of tenders in each case; and if he will give the reasons in those cases where tenders were not invited.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Correspondence

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 8 April, what is his practice with regard to causing replies to be sent on his behalf by his Private Secretary to official letters addressed to him as Secretary of State; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: My private secretary operates in accordance with my instructions. These ensure that I have the opportunity to see and approve the replies to correspondents which he sends on my behalf.

Criminal Statistics

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, following the publication of the crime figures for Scotland 1986, he will list in respect of each police force area in Scotland in 1986 the total number of *(a)* offences notified to the police, *(b)* offences of violence against the person, *(c)* burglaries, *(d)* thefts, *(e)* offences of fraud and forgery and *(f)* offences of criminal damage.

Mr. Lang: The table sets out the requested figures on crimes recorded by the police, using the best available approximations in the Scottish crime classification to the categories listed in the question.

Crimes Recorded by Police Force Area, Scotland 1986

Crime	*Central*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Grampian*	*Lothian and Borders*	*Northern*	*Strathclyde*	*Tayside*	*Scotland Total*
Total Crimes	20,450	7,321	23,828	37,466	79,900	12,621	246,610	35,641	463,837
Violence against the Person	565	273	607	911	2,843	313	6,497	900	12,909
Burglary	3,871	1,171	4,972	6,576	14,209	1,727	57,051	7,328	96,905
Theft	9,071	3,135	10,254	17,374	37,476	5,389	112,561	15,379	210,639
Fraud and Forgery	1605	524	1,566	2,109	8,122	1,143	13,112	2,389	30,570
Criminal Damage	4,180	1,600	4,585	8,203	10,581	2,127	40,831	6,782	78,889

Notes:—The categories listed above have been derived from the categories of the Scottish crime classification as follows:
'Violence against the Person': all non-sexual crimes of violence (Group 1 of the standard classification) apart from robbery, those crimes of indecency (Group 2) which contain a violent element, and certain crimes involving malicious and reckless conduct.
'Burglary': housebreaking.
'Theft': opening lockfast places and clandestine removal in addition to theft per se.
'Fraud and Forgery': fraud, forgery and uttering, bankruptcy and currency offences.
'Criminal Damage': fire-raising, vandalism and other crimes of malicious and reckless conduct not involving violence against the person.

Rating Reform

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has as to how the current produce of domestic rates in Scotland and in each of the regions in Scotland might be raised through community charge or local income tax with and without resource equalisation in the cases of *(a)* a single person on 125 per cent. of an average male manual worker's wage, *(b)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)*, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment, *(c)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)*, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in part-time employment, *(d)* a married man with earnings as in *(a)*, whose wife has no income, *(e)* a married couple with earnings as in *(b)*, living with a son or daughter aged over 18 years whose earnings are the average for full-time workers in the 18-24 year age group, *(f)* a married couple with earnings as in *(b)*, living with a son or daughter aged 18-24 years who is unemployed, *(g)* a single person on 100 per cent. of an average male non-manual worker's wage and *(h)* a married man with earnings as in *(g)*, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment.

Mr. Ancram: The estimated average local tax bills under the community charge system and under a local

income tax system with and without resource equalisation needed to replace domestic rates in 1985-86, are as follows for the specific cases requested.

(a) A single person on 125 per cent. of average earnings for a full-time male adult manual worker in Scotland

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	158	364	262
Central	187	432	542
Dumfries and Galloway	155	356	330
Fife	210	491	364
Grampian	157	364	262
Highland	153	356	271
Lothian	225	525	635
Strathclyde	229	533	559
Tayside	194	449	550
Scotland	207	483	474

(b) A married man with earnings as in (a), whose wife's earnings are the Scottish average for adult women in full-time employment

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	316	482	347
Central	374	572	717
Dumfries and Galloway	310	471	437
Fife	420	650	482
Grampian	314	482	347
Highland	306	471	359
Lothian	450	695	840
Strathclyde	458	706	740
Tayside	388	594	728
Scotland	414	639	628

(c) A married man with earnings as in (a) whose wife's earnings are the average for adult women in part-time employment

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	316	330	238
Central	374	392	492
Dumfries and Galloway	310	323	300
Fife	420	445	330
Grampian	314	330	238
Highland	306	323	246
Lothian	450	476	576
Strathclyde	458	484	507
Tayside	388	407	499
Scotland	414	438	430

(d) A married man with earnings as in (a) whose wife has no income

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	316	310	224
Central	374	368	462
Dumfries and Galloway	310	303	281
Fife	420	419	310
Grampian	314	310	224
Highland	306	303	231
Lothian	450	447	541
Strathclyde	458	455	476
Tayside	388	383	469
Scotland	414	411	404

(e) A married couple with earnings as in (b) living with a son or daughter aged over 18 whose earnings are the average for full-time workers in the 18-24 year age group

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	474	647	466
Central	561	767	963
Dumfries and Galloway	465	632	587
Fife	630	873	647
Grampian	471	647	466
Highland	459	632	482
Lothian	675	933	1,129
Strathclyde	687	948	993
Tayside	582	798	978
Scotland	621	858	843

(f) A married couple with earnings as in (b), living with a son or daughter aged 18-24 who is unemployed

Area	Community charge (rebated) (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	429	482	347
Central	488	572	717
Dumfries and Galloway	422	471	437
Fife	543	650	482
Grampian	430	482	347
Highland	419	471	359
Lothian	574	695	840
Strathclyde	584	706	740
Tayside	507	594	728
Scotland	536	639	628

(g) A single person on 100 per cent. of average earnings for a full-time male adult non-manual *worker in Scotland*

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	158	406	293
Central	187	482	604
Dumfries and Galloway	155	397	368
Fife	210	548	406
Grampian	157	406	293
Highland	153	397	302
Lothian	225	585	708
Strathclyde	229	595	623
Tayside	194	500	614
Scotland	207	538	529

(h) A married man with earnings as in (g), whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Borders	316	524	378
Central	374	621	800
Dumfries and Galloway	310	512	475
Fife	420	706	524

Area	Community charge (£)	Equalised local income tax (£)	Unequalised local income tax (£)
Grampian	314	524	378
Highland	306	512	390
Lothian	450	755	914
Strathclyde	458	767	804
Tayside	388	646	792
Scotland	414	694	682

Notes:

(1) The average community charges for 1985-86 used in the tables were published in the *Official Report* on 20 February 1986.

(2) The underlying local income tax rates (with resource equalisation) have been estimated on the assumption that some form of resource equalisation would make the yield of 1p in the £ the same per adult in all areas.

(3) Published information on taxable resources in local authority areas is only available up to 1982-83. The sample size is small and the regional pattern shows considerable variation from year to year. Estimates of local income tax rates without resource equalisation are therefore subject to some uncertainty. Those in the table have been produced by applying the pattern of unequalised tax rates calculated for 1982-83 to 1985-86 average earnings.

(4) Estimates of average gross earnings have been taken from the 1985 New Earnings Survey. The average figures for Scotland have been used in each case with the exception of average earnings for the 18-24 year age group, where only GB figures were readily available.

(5) In applying local income tax rates to cases *(a)* to *(h)* it is assumed that earnings are the only sources of income and that only personal tax allowances apply.

(6) In case *(f)* it has been assumed that the unemployed son or daughter will be in receipt of unemployment benefit.

Food Consumption

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on food consumption in Scotland by income group at the latest date and 10 years previously for the following foods: *(a)* white bread, *(b)* brown bread (including wholemeal), *(c)* sugar, *(d)* total fats, *(e)* fresh fruit, *(f)* fresh vegetables and *(g)* potatoes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have been asked to reply.

Data are not readily available in the precise form requested by the National Food Survey provides the following information:

Average Household Consumption in Scotland
(ozs/person/week)

	1975	1985
White bread (standard loaves)	30·36	19·34
Brown bread (incl. wholemeal)	2·23	6·04
Other bread	5·99	6·65
Sugar	10·72	8·04
Total fats	10·00	9·01
Fresh fruit	14·85	16·02
Fresh vegetables	18·38	18·63
Potatoes (excl. processed)	45·7	39·45

Average Household Consumption by Income Group in Great Britain
(oz/person/week)
1975

Income Group	A1	A2	B	C	D	E1	E2	OAP
Income levels[1]	£110 and over	£82 and under £110	£49 and under £82	£28 and under £49	less than £28	£28 or more	less than £28	n.a.
White bread (standard loaves)	17·72	21·67	27·77	30·68	30·14	22·93	25·39	25·40
Brown bread (incl. wholemeal)	4·98	4·09	2·89	2·76	2·79	6·14	5·38	5·16
Other bread	4·80	2·94	3·42	3·59	4·91	4·29	3·87	4·75
Sugar	6·38	9·24	10·55	12·14	12·09	10·66	13·23	15·21
Total fats	10·49	10·39	10·79	11·09	11·94	13·76	11·46	13·06
Fresh fruit	26·75	22·87	17·06	14·45	13·98	30·77	21·80	19·61
Fresh vegetables	29·91	24·81	24·44	23·69	25·32	35·35	27·91	31·98
Potatoes (excl. processed)	31·68	40·74	43·25	47·67	49·02	40·05	40·74	39·56

n.a. = Not applicable.

[1] Defined as the gross weekly income of the head of household. Income groups A1 to D include households with an earner; E1 and E2 are income groups without an earner. OAP households are those in which at least three quarters of total income derived from National Insurance retirement or similar pensions and/or supplementary pensions or allowances paid in supplementation or instead of such pensions.

1985

Income Group	A1	A2	B	C	D	E1	E2	OAP
Income levels[1]	£395 and over	£300 and under £395	£165 and under £300	£85 and under £165	less than £85	£85 or more	less than £85	n.a.
White bread (standard loaves)	10·73	11·38	16·17	21·53	27·61	12·28	22·96	21·01
Brown bread (incl. wholemeal)	8·79	7·97	7·57	6·52	4·83	12·44	7·31	9·89
Other bread	3·74	4·41	4·45	4·39	3·80	4·79	4·08	4·04
Sugar	5·40	6·06	6·50	8·52	9·76	9·64	10·42	14·34
Total fats	8·92	8·68	9·07	10·13	9·47	12·29	11·72	13·51
Fresh fruit	29·41	23·69	19·63	16·01	11·28	32·89	16·50	21·59
Fresh vegetables	32·73	26·30	25·43	23·52	20·96	35·05	26·59	31·49
Potatoes (excl. processed)	24·90	30·11	36·26	42·70	54·66	38·99	47·92	42·78

n.a. = Not applicable.
[1] Defined as the gross weekly income of the head of household. Income groups A1 to D include households with an earner; E1 and E2 are income groups without an earner. OAP households are those in which at least three quarters of total income derived from National Insurance retirement or similar pensions and/or supplementary pensions or allowances paid in supplementation or instead of such pensions.

Primary Schools

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many primary schools with fewer than three teachers there are in each of Scotland's regions and island areas and if he will give a breakdown of figures to show the number in each district.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1987, c. 563]: The numbers of education authority primary schools in each region and island area in which less than three full-time equivalent teachers were employed in 1984 are as follows. Education statistics are not collated at district level.

	Number
Borders	36
Central	22
Dumfries and Galloway	47
Fife	23
Grampian	82
Highland	113
Lothian	18
Strathclyde	96
Tayside	61
Orkney	10
Shetland	19
Western Isles	36

Reckless Driving (Deaths)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many motorists alleged to have caused death by reckless driving have been charged with that offence and how many with culpable homicide in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *53*]: The available information is given in the table. Information on persons charged is not collected centrally.

Persons proceeded against

Scotland

	Causing death by reckless driving	*Culpable homicide as a result of a road traffic death*
1977	59	n/a
1978	51	n/a
1979	38	n/a
1980	47	n/a
1981	35	2
1982	31	0
1983	31	0
1984	22	0
1985	31	0
1986 (provisional)	33	0

n/a = Not available.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent by each local education authority in Scotland on the purchase of text books in each year since 1978-79 in terms of *(a)* current prices and *(b)* 1978-79 prices.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: The information available is given in the following tables, which have been compiled from local authority financial returns. There have been some variations in the basis of recording of expenditure under the heading of text and library books, both between authorities and from year to year. In addition to those cases specifically noted in the table, there may be other cases where the figures given also include other equipment as well as text and library books.

Table 1: School expenditure on text and library books—at out-turn prices

(£'000)

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*[1]1985-86*
Borders	66	94	1,397	130	163	76	208	242
Central	209	279	316	365	[2]1,166	[2]1,343	[2]1,367	[2]1,572
Dumfries and Galloway	155	168	170	166	189	193	209	222
Fife	319	363	360	452	403	1,239	509	506
Grampian	394	1,575	1,667	667	716	655	708	631
Highland	460	203	256	790	899	[2]1,507	[2]1,556	[2]1,325
Lothian	687	703	931	798	718	739	650	750
Strathclyde	3,333	3,304	2,844	3,346	3,741	3,151	3,757	3,153
Tayside	219	234	248	277	291	331	369	423
Orkney	87	78	65	55	36	39	33	35
Shetland	26	33	38	53	66	178	169	54
Western Isles	142	59	76	223	182	101	65	78

[1] Provisional.
[2] These figures include expenditure on other educational tools and equipment as well as on text and library books.

Table 2: School expenditure on text and library books—at November 1978 prices

(£'000)

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*[1]1985-86*
Borders	66	82	1,031	83	92	36	87	91
Central	209	242	233	232	[2]655	[2]628	[2]574	[2]588
Dumfries and Galloway	155	146	125	106	106	90	88	83

Region	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	[1]1985-86
Fife	319	315	266	288	226	580	214	189
Grampian	394	1,367	1,230	425	402	306	297	236
Highland	460	176	189	503	505	[2]705	[2]653	[2]496
Lothian	687	610	687	508	403	346	273	281
Strathclyde	3,333	2,868	2,099	2,131	2,102	1,474	1,577	1,180
Tayside	219	203	183	176	163	155	155	158
Orkney	87	68	48	35	20	18	14	13
Shetland	26	29	28	34	37	83	71	20
Western Isles	142	51	56	142	102	47	27	29

[1] Provisional.
[2] These figures include expenditure on other educational tools and equipment as well as on text and library books.

Scottish Association of Interpreters for the Deaf

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each of the last five years the total grant paid by central Government under section 9 and section 10, respectively, of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or under any other heading to the Scottish Association of Intepreters for the Deaf.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: Grants are payable by my right hon. and learned Friend under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 for training and under section 10(1) for other purposes. The association has not hitherto requested any payments of grant under section 9 of the Act. Annual payments of grant under section 10(1) during the period in question have been as follows:

	£
1982-83	nil
1983-84	nil
1984-85	2,604
1985-86	5,585
1986-87	8,571

Deaf People (Interpreters)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many qualified interpreters for the deaf there are in Scotland; and how many of these hold the Certificate in Communication with the Deaf as a result of attendance at the course run at Moray House college of education.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: Information of this kind is not held centrally, but my Department has ascertained that there are 16 interpreters on a register maintained by the Scottish Association of Interpreters for the Deaf, 10 of whom qualified through the Moray House course, and that there are 14 trainees currently working towards assessment.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Mains (Bursts)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the volume of water lost through burst mains each year in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible for individual water undertakers to identify water losses resulting from mains bursts, and therefore no national estimate can be made.

Anti-fouling Paint Regulations

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce the date for publication of anti-fouling paint regulations; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am currently considering the comments received during the formal consultation on the draft regulations published in the London, Belfast and Edinburgh *Gazettes* on 13 March. I shall make a further announcement shortly.

Government Buildings (Lift Maintenance)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons are currently employed by the Property Services Agency on lift maintenance.

Mr. Chope: 126.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will place the contract for the maintenance of lifts in Government buildings in London with a private sector company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Lifts in most Government buildings throughout the United Kingdom, including many in London, are already maintained by contract with private sector companies.

The policy of the Property Services Agency is to continue to use contractors for this work whilst making economic use of existing direct employees.

Financial Detriment Compensation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the report from the London and Metropolitan Staff Commission on financial detriment compensation for Greater London council and metropolitan council staff.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 16 March 1987 at column *404*.

"Paying for Local Government"

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his consideration of the responses to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government"; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: My right hon. Friend announced, on 15 December, that the Government intend to introduce legislation no later than the first session of the next

Parliament to implement the main Green Paper proposals. A number of detailed issues remain to be resolved, and decisions on these will be taken in due course, in the light of the responses to the Green Paper and other representations that have been made.

Kidbrooke Training Centre, Rochester Way

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when the Kidbrooke training centre at Rochester way, S.E.3, was closed; and what use has been made of the site and building by the Property Services Agency since then;

(2) what proposals are under consideration by the Property Services Agency for the site of the former Kidbrooke training centre at Rochester way, S.E.3.

Mr. Chope: The former MSC training centre on part of this Ministry of Defence site was closed in 1982. Plans were considered for meeting the requirements of both Inland Revenue and DHSS for computer centres here and on another vacant part of the site. In the event these did not proceed. With its potential development value in mind occupants of other buildings on the site have been moved elsewhere with a view to its disposal as a whole. The MOD intend to move their remaining operation from the site, and the PSA have appointed agents with a view to its early marketing and disposal.

Royal Arsenal Gatehouse, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the restoration of the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse at Woolwich; and what reply he has given.

Mr. Chope: None.

Brixton

Mr. Shelton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in view of the degree of dereliction, unemployment and poor housing in Brixton in the London borough of Lambeth, he will consider the setting up of an urban development corporation for that area.

Mr. John Patten: I have noted with great interest my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Planning Control

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of his consultations on regulations excluding minor forms of development from planning control.

Mr. Tracey: I take it my hon. Friend is referring to the consultation on a draft revised text of class I of schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order. This class defines development which is permitted within the curtilage of a dwelling house. We published the draft text on 5 January and invited commeints by 2 March. We have now placed in the Libraries of both Houses copies of the responses from those individuals and organisations who agreed to our doing so. We are at present considering all the responses and are not yet ready to make any announcement.

Control of Advertisement Regulations

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to announce his conclusions on the recommendations of his Department's working party set up to review the operation of the control of advertisement regulations in general, and in respect of estate agents' boards in particular.

Mr. Tracey: We are considering what action we should now take in the light of the responses to the consulation paper.

River Pollution

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistics on the causes of river pollution are available to him, with particular reference to instances of oil and chemical pollution, either from static storage facilities or from road transport accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: While total numbers of reported water pollution incidents in each water authority area are published annually, no detailed analysis by type of incident is available on an industry-wide basis. Such information can only be obtained from individual water authorities.

The Department is currently discussing with the industry how this sort of information might be made more readily available.

Rates

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority the projected opening and closing rate fund balances which appeared in their rate estimates for 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: I have today placed the information available, in the House of Commons Library.

Courts Centre (Newcastle)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretarty of State for the Environment when he expects work on the construction of the new courts centre at Newcastle Quayside to start.

Mr. Chope: I have now authorised the Property Services Agency to invite tenders for the contract for the construction of a new major courts centre at Newcastle Quayside for the Lord Chancellor's Department. The building will provide 10 Crown courts, three county courts, together with associated accommodation. The construction is expected to take about three years to complete and will provide welcome employment for a substantial number of building workers in the area.

Advertising

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of his Department's advertising and promotional budget is spent in regional and local newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: During the financial year 1986-87 my department, including the Property Services Agency, spent £1,980,900 on advertising and other forms of paid publicity (other than on recruitment, tendering and statutory notices). Expenditure in regional and local newspapers amounted to £3,000.

Housing Defects

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the funds available to local authorities to implement the provisions of the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Department is currently considering bids for additional resources from authorities which consider they will have particularly high expenditure on obligations under the housing defects legislation in 1987-88, in relation to the size of their capital programme. Decisions about additional allocations will be announced shortly.

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of local authorities deliberately delaying their implementation of the provisions of the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities are responsible for implementing the scheme of assistance, in accordance with the provisions of the housing defects legislation. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on particular cases; but we do look to all authorities to implement the Act in a reasonable fashion.

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of contractors withdrawing from work on the reinstatement of prefabricated reinforced concrete houses.

Mr. John Patten: The National House Building Council is making very good progress with approved repair methods for various types of designated PRC properties and repair works are now getting under way in many parts of the country. We have no evidence of contractors wishing to withdraw from this work.

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of protracted delays experienced by private owners of prefabricated reinforced concrete houses in effecting reinstatement of their homes, he will review the implementation of the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. John Patten: Repairs are now progressing in many parts of the country. Under the terms of the designations owners do still have over seven years in which to seek and obtain assistance; it can be helpful for authorities and owners to reach an understanding on a likely timetable for assistance. My Department is continuing to monitor progress but we have no current plans to amend the legislation.

Community Charge

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will prepare estimates of the likely level of the community charge without safety nets in the metropolitan borough of Kirklees;

(2) what will be the effect of the community tax on the average householder's payment in Kirklees.

Dr. Boyson: Figures were placed in the Library on 1 April illustrating the possible effect of our community charge and non-domestic rate proposals on all local authorities. I have today written to the hon. Member with details of the possible effects of our proposals in Kirklees.

Housing

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken, and intends to take in the future, to maintain and improve the existing housing stock in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Public Sector Dwellings

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the proportion of domestic dwellings owned by public sector authorities in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries; and what is the figure for the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) by how much gross county council expenditure has risen in Derbyshire, in real terms, between *(a)* 1980-81 and *(b)* 1981-82 and the latest date for which figures are available; and how these figures compare with the average gross county council expenditure rises over the same period of time;

(2) by how much current county council expenditure has risen in Derbyshire, in real terms, between *(a)* 1980-81 and *(b)* 1981-82 and the latest date for which figures are available; and how these figures compare with the average current county council expenditure rises over the same period of time.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: The available information, based on returns received from local authorities, is as follows:

	Percentage change in real[1] terms
Net current expenditure[2]	*1981-82 to 1986-87*
Derbyshire County Council	15·9
Average for Shire County Councils	8·1
Gross expenditure[3]	*1981-82 to 1985-86*
Derbyshire County Council	6·6
Average for Shire County Councils	−0·6

[1] Using GDP deflator to convert cash values to constant prices.

[2] "Net current expenditure" represents Rate Fund Revenue Account spending on services, ie excluding debt charges and other on current items, net of income such as sales fees and charges and non-relevant specific grants but gross of rate income, Rate Support Grant and Relevant Specific and Supplementary Grants.

[3] "Gross expenditure" represents Rate Fund Revenue Account gross spending on employees, other running expenses, debt charges and Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Purity

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on recent steps taken to improve the purity of food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There is already a range of legislation regulating the safety and quality of food. Regulations are kept under review so that appropriate initiatives can be taken in response to new developments.

Radioactivity

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of the results of radionuclide level tests between 1980 and 1986 in Cumbria have been published by his Department; and in which publications they appear.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Results of tests carried out for radionuclide levels in the aquatic environment for all parts of the country in the years 1980 to 1985 inclusive were published in annual reports entitled "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles", copies of which are placed in the Library of the House. Results for 1986 will be published later this year in the same way. An additional report was also published last year describing the results of the Department's monitoring for Chernobyl fallout in the aquatic environment in the months immediately following the Chernobyl accident.

Results of the tests carried out in the agricultural and terrestrial environment in Cumbria were not in the past published on a regular basis. Some results are contained in a scientific paper entitled "Radioactivity in Environmental Samples Taken in the Sellafield and Ravenglass areas of West Cumbria 1977-1982 (Bradford, Curtis and Popplewell)" which was published in "Science of the Total Environment (1964) volume 35 pp 267-283.

Results for 1986 will, however, be published later this year in the first annual report of this Department's expanded programme of testing in the agricultural and terrestrial environment in the vicinity of major nuclear sites in England and Wales which commenced on 1 January 1986. Results of testing undertaken in May to December 1986 following the Chernobyl accident were published in "Radionuclide Levels in Food, Animals and Agricultural Products: Post-Chernobyle Monitoring in England and Wales", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional staff his Department is making available to support the advisory committee on salmon stocks.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The staff of the branch which provides the secretary to the committee has been strengthened by two additional posts and we are recruiting additional scientific staff at the fisheries laboratory to assist in the examination of subjects of concern to the committee.

Hungarian Frozen French-Fried Potatoes

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the import of Hungarian frozen French-fried potatoes; what steps he has taken to assess the quality of such products; and if he will make a statement on future agricultural imports from Eastern bloc countries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There were no such imports in recent years. Imports from Hungary are subject to a quantitative restriction which is under review in the context of a possible EC/Hungary agreement on trade and commercial and economic co-operation.

Bovine Somatotropine Hormone

Mr. Alton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning testing of the bovine somatotropine hormone on cattle in Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received representations from two organisations in Yorkshire against the use of bovine somatotropine. Current field trials are authorised under the Medicines Act 1968.

Mr. Alton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to whether milk produced by cattle being treated with the bovine somatotropine hormone is being delivered to creameries; and what research or monitoring is being done to the side effects of the consumption of such milk.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Trials on cattle using this substance are being carried out under the authority of animal test certificates issued under the Medicines Act 1968. Had there been any doubts about the safety to consumers the certificates would not have been issued and the trials could not take place.

There is no requirement that milk from cows involved in the trials should be treated differently to that from other cattle either in the United Kingdom or, so far as I can ascertain, in any of the other countries where trials are being conducted.

Forestry

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will state, for each country in the European Economic Community, the percentage of its land surface that is afforested.

Mr. John MacKay: I have been asked to reply.
The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of total land surface afforested (including unproductive woodland)

Country	Percentage
United Kingdom	9
Belgium	20
Luxembourg	32
Denmark	11
France	28
West Germany	30
Greece	45
Republic of Ireland	6
Italy	27
Netherlands	10
Spain	25
Portugal	35

Vineyards

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grants are currently available for the establishment of English vineyards and ancillary purposes in the light of his alternative land use policy.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: Grants are currently available for certain works in vineyards under the agriculture improvement scheme. As my right hon. Friend announced on 9 February, he intends to introduce new grants to assist farm diversification, including on-farm processing of agricultural products. A consultative document will be issued shortly, which I shall send to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider making grants available for the establishment of English vineyards for *(a)* the purchase of vines, *(b)* their support, *(c)* trellising, *(d)* wiring and *(e)* windbreaks.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: The growing of grapes is among the activities for which grants are available, subject to eligibility, under the agricultural improvement scheme. The scheme makes specific provision for grants towards the cost of stakes and wireworks and for certain types of shelter screens. Grants are not, however, available for the purchase of vines.

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that only English-produced sugar and not rectified concentrated grape must from Italy is permitted to be added to the fermentation process of English wine until such time as enrichment is necessary or permitted.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: The Community wine regulations provide for the addition of sugar, concentrated grape must or rectified concentrated grape must in the process of wine fermentation. While enrichment using sugar is the normal practice among English wine producers there is no reason why they should be prevented from using the approved alternatives and it would be contrary to Community law were the United Kingdom seek to limit their choice in the way suggested.

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to resist any attempts to impose rectified concentrated grape must in the production of English wine until such time as enrichment is necessary and permitted.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: Under article 20 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 822/87, the European Commission is committed to studying the possibilities for enriching wine with sugar, or concentrated grape must, whether or not rectified. This study and its conclusions are due to be reported to the Council in 1990, although it is possible that the Council may decide in the context of this year's price fixing proposals that the date should be brought forward. When the study is completed, I shall consider in consultation with all the interests concerned any recommendations it may make for changes to Community law, including a recommendation, should there be one, to require the use of rectified concentrated grape must for enrichment.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his policy regarding the manifestation of phylloxera in English vineyards;

(2) if he will abandon his policy of attempted eradication of phylloxera in English vineyards.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: We have reviewed policy in relation to phylloxera. We have decided that we should not require the compulsory grubbing-up of infested vines. Where a vineyard is infested, we shall impose statutory restrictions which will not permit vines to be moved from the premises. In addition, access to infected areas of vineyards will be restricted, although care will be taken to allow tourist access to continue to the greatest possible extent consistent with plant health safety. When vineyard owners do grub up vines from infested vineyards, the Ministry will monitor the operation and, if the pest is found, will require the land to be kept clear of vines for 12 months, after which re-planting with certified resistant grafted rootstock will be permitted. These measures are designed to cause the minimum disruption of the normal activities of vineyards consistent with minimising the risk of spread of the disease. The plant health and seeds inspectorate will continue to monitor and inspect imports of vines. Phylloxera remains a notifiable disease.

The technical advice is that the best defence against phylloxera is the use of vines on resistant grafted rootstocks. Growers can protect themselves by using such vines when re-planting.

SOCIAL SERVICES

AIDS

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra resources have been allocated to Trent regional health authority in 1987-88 to help to deal with AIDS.

Mr. Newton: At the end of March 1987, the Trent region had 12 reported AIDS patients, of whom six had died. No additional funds have been allocated to the Trent regional health authority specifically for the treatment and care of patients with HIV infection and AIDS. It has however received an increase of 6·3 per cent. in its allocation of the resources available for spending on hospital and community health services in 1987-88, which is above the national average increase in regional health authority allocations; and we have provided £44,000 in 1987-88 for the haemophilia reference centre located in the Trent region which is specifically to assist in the provision of AIDS counselling facilities for haemophiliacs.

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest figures for AIDS carriers and deaths in the United Kingdom with the causes or sources available.

Mr. Fowler: The first quarterly report which I have published today, together with the regular monthly update, provides the information which my hon. Friend has requested. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

The report does three things:

First, it gives a breakdown of reported cases of AIDS by patient characteristics (table A) and by region from which the report is made (table B).

Second, it provides the first of a series of quarterly breakdowns of people who are infected but who have not yet developed the disease. These are broken down by patient characteristics for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (table C) and for Scotland (table D) and by English regions, Wales and Northern Ireland (table E).

Third, it explains how the information is collected and checked.

I believe that it is important that we provide regular full and prompt information about AIDS so that the public know what the position really is. It is equally important that the information is as accurate as we can make it. That is why the computer records have been rigorously

rechecked and duplicate records removed. The apparent low increase in the monthly AIDS figures is explained by this. Thirty-one new cases were in fact reported in March.

We must continue to take all possible action to prevent the spread of AIDS. The public education campaign will continue and one of the next campaigns will be directed at drug misuse and the sharing of equipment.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost to each health board, of the increased staff required in order to carry out testing for the AIDS virus; and if these costs are included in the Government's stated expenditure on AIDS.

Mr. Newton: Information on staff costs which health authorities incur on HIV testing is not available centrally and has not been included in the Government's stated expenditure on AIDS. Many of these tests are dealt with by laboratories of the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS). It is estimated that PHLS spent £0·75 million on work connected with HIV tests in 1986/87. Part of this will have been for staff, but I regret that we do not have a breakdown between staff and other costs.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he intends to introduce further screening for the AIDS-related virus HTLV 1;

(2) whether his Department is monitoring the number of people in Britain with the aids-related virus HTLV 1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what figures he has for the number of people carrying the HTLV 1 virus;

(2) what plans he has to test blood supplies for the HTLV 1 virus;

(3) what plans he has to combat the spread of the HTLV 1 virus; what facilities he is making available to screen people for the HTLV 1 virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *71-72*]: Although the HTLV 1 virus is thought to belong to the same family as the AIDS virus, HIV, it does not cause AIDS.

Research studies carried out to date suggest that the virus is not prevalent in this country. There are at present, therefore, no plans to introduce measures for routine screening of individuals or blood donations for this virus. However, appropriate measures would be considered should further research show that they were needed.

NHS (Hospital and Community Services)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to answer the question on National Health Service hospital and community services from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to which he gave holding replies on 27 February, *Official Report*, column 449, and on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *82*.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member today.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will provide figures for the change in real expenditure on National Health Service hospital and community health services for each year between the earliest year after 1974 and the most recent year for which comparable figures are available as measured using *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* the National Health Service pay and price deflator, by Greater London district health authorities in total, and by Inner London district health authorities in total;

(2) when he will answer the question on National Health Service hospital and community services from the honourable Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to which the Minister for Health the hon. Member for Braintree, gave a holding reply on 27 February, *Official Report*, column *449*.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his replies*, 27 February 1987, c. *449* and 23 March 1987 c. *827*]: Since expenditure on hospital and community health services forms part of an overall health service policy which seeks also to build up family practitioner services in the community, the table shows gross expenditure in 1985-86 prices as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, for:

hospital and community health services, family practitioner services and community health and family practitioners services in Greater London between 1978-79 and 1985-86;

hospital and community health services and hospital and community health and family practitioner services in Inner London between 1982-83 and 1985-86;

family practitioner services in Inner London between 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Comparable figures for hospital and community health services in Inner London prior to the 1982 reorganisation of the National Health Service are not available. Information relating to Greater London prior to 1978-79 is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

It is inappropriate to revalue district health authority expenditure by reference to centrally assessed movements in NHS pay and prices as the composition of that expenditure can differ substantially from the national average.

It is important to set the figures in the context of a London population which has been falling (there was a decrease of some 17 per cent. between 1971 and 1985) and the policy of redistributing resources to areas which historically have been deprived of services or have high population growth. However, the process of change can present transitional difficulties in those Health Regions receiving less than average growth. For that reason we have established a special fund of £15 million in each of the years 1987-88 and 1988-89 to provide appropriate transitional help. The Thames Regions and London Postgraduate SHAs have been allocated £12·9 million from the £15 million available for 1987-88. This means that Inner London health authorities collectively can expect real terms growth over financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 of the order of 2 per cent.

Gross expenditure[1] in 1985-86 prices as measured by the gross domestic product deflator (£000)

	Greater London			Inner London		
	Hospital and Community Health Services[2]	*Family Practitioner Services*	*Hospital and Community Health Services and Family Practitioner Services*	*Hospital and Community Health Services[2]*	*Family Practitioner Services[4]*	*Hospital and Community Health Services and Family Practitioner Services[5]*
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1978-79	1,981,618	391,645	2,373,263	[3]n.a.	153,109	n.a.
1979-80	1,995,687	389,693	2,385,380	[3]n.a.	153,303	n.a.
1980-81	2,178,896	406,154	2,585,050	[3]n.a.	159,262	n.a.
1981-82	2,209,495	425,382	2,634,877	[3]n.a.	167,572	n.a.
1982-83	2,180,987	451,141	2,632,129	1,221,102	178,199	1,399,301
1983-84	2,197,472	454,667	2,652,138	1,240,221	179,661	1,419,882
1984-85	2,191,633	481,043	2,672,676	1,231,395	189,493	1,420,888
1985-86	2,162,073	482,598	2,644,673	1,211,235	188,752	1,399,987
Percentage real terms growth 1978-79 to 1985-86	9·1	23·2	11·4	n.a.	23·3	n.a.

[1] Figures are based on total gross expenditure (revenue and capital) from the summarised income and expenditure accounts of area, district and special health authorities and family practitioner committees.

[2] Greater and Inner London have been defined as comprising the following health authorities:

(i) Inner London health authorities:

1982-83 to 1985-86

Hammersmith and Fulham, Victoria } (Riverside in 1985-86)
Paddington
Hampstead
Bloomsbury
Islington
City and Hackney
Newham
Tower Hamlets
West Lambeth
Camberwell
Lewisham and North Southwark
Wandsworth
Special Health Authorities for the London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals

ii. Greater London health authorities

1982-83 to 1985-86

Inner London health authorities listed at 2(i) above
Barnet
Harrow
Brent
Hounslow and Spelthorne
Ealing
Hillingdon
Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Enfield
Haringey
Redbridge
Waltham Forest
Bexley
Greenwich
Bromley
Croydon
Kingston and Esher
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton
Sutton and Merton

1978-79 to 1981-82

Barnet
Brent and Harrow
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow
Hillingdon
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster
Barking and Havering
Camden and Islington
City and East London
Enfield and Haringey
Redbridge and Waltham Forest
Greenwich and Bexley
Bromley
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham
Croydon
Kingston and Richmond
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth
Boards of Governors for the London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals

[3] Details of expenditure by district is not available centrally prior to 1982-83.

[4] Inner London FPC and DHA boundaries are not coterminous. It is not possible therefore to measure FPC expenditure within Inner London as defined at 2(i) above. The definition of Inner London used in this column comprises the following FPCs:

Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster
Camden and Islington
City and East London
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth

[5] Comprises the health authorities listed at 2(i) and the family practitioner committees listed at (4) above.

NHS Staff

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage change each year since 1979 in the number of National Health Service staff as follows *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nursing and midwifery, *(c)* professional and technical, *(d)* works, *(e)* maintenance, *(f)* administrative, *(g)* clerical, *(h)* ancillary and (i) ambulance personnel.

Mr. Newton: The figures are shown in the table.

NHS directly employed staff by main staff group: year-on-year percentage changes based on whole-time equivalent staff in post at 30 September each year

England[1]

Percentage change	*Medical and Dental*[2]	*Nursing and Midwifery*[3,4]	*Professional and Technical*[5]	*Works*	*Maintenance*	*Administrative and Clerical*[6]	*Ancillary*[5]	*Ambulance (including officers)*
1979-80	+3·0	+3·2	+2·9	+5·8	+2·3	+2·4	(7)	+3·7
1980-81	+2·1	+5·9	+5·4	+4·1	+2·2	+3·2	+0·1	+2·5
1981-82	+1·1	+1·4	+3·1	−1·3	+0·1	(7)	−1·0	+0·6
1982-83	+1·9	(7)	+2·2	−2·1	−1·0	+1·1	−2·5	+0·4
1983-84	+0·2	+0·1	+5·8	+0·7	−3·0	+0·3	−8·4	−1·6
1984-85	+1·6	+0·9	+2·3	+1·2	−2·3	+0·7	−8·4	+0·5
1985-86[8]	+0·6	+0·2	+2·4	−3·9	−3·2	+0·3	−10·9	+5·0

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Includes staff at the Dental Estimates Board, Prescription Pricing Authority, London Post-Graduate Special Health Authorities and Family Practitioner Committee Staff on health authority payrolls.

[2] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff in hospitals and community health services, hospital practitioners and part-time medical/dental officers (clinical assistants).

[3] Includes agency staff.

[4] Not adjusted for reduction in nurses' working hours in 1980 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

[5] On 1 April 1984 approximately 2,600 (wte) Operating Department Assistants were re-classified from the Ancillary to the Professional and Technical staff group. The figures had not been adjusted for this re-classification.

[6] There is no standard break-down of staff within the Administrative and Clerical staff group into separate "Administrative" and "Clerical" categories—these staff have therefore been shown as a single group.

[7] Less than 0·05 per cent.

[8] Figures for 1986 are provisional.

Senior Registrars (Upgrading)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 20 February, if he will estimate the additional cost of upgrading 500 currently employed senior registrars at the top of their incremental scale to consultant grade, starting at the bottom of their incremental scale.

Mr. Newton: The bottom of the consultant salary scale is currently £23,500. The top of the senior registrar scale is £16,750 but on average senior registrars will receive an additional £5,528 as payment for units of medical time. The additional basic salary cost of upgrading a senior registrar at the top of the scale would thus be some £1,200 in the first year on average, increasing in subsequent years as the newly-appointed consultant ascends the consultant scale. Employer's contributions to superannuation and national insurance would increase this to about £1,400. The total net salary cost of upgrading 500 senior registrars would thus be some £700,000 in the first year.

There could however be wider consequential cost implications of a considerable order, but for which there is at present no basis for a precise estimate. A reduction in senior registrar numbers alone would not be sufficient to solve the underlying problems of hospital medical staffing; and as I pointed out in my earlier reply, however, the changes in the hospital staffing structure proposed in "Achieving a Balance" do not envisage converting senior registrar to consultant posts on anything like this scale.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, in numerical order, the 10 regional health authorities which have achieved the greatest percentage reduction in *(a)* general in-patient waiting lists and *(b)* general in-patient waiting lists over the last 10 years.

Mr. Newton: The available information is given in the table.

Ranking of Regions by percentage change in the number of patients on the in-patient waiting list between 1976 and 1986

Health authority	*Numbers of patients on in-patient waiting list*				*In-patient cases treated*	
	September 1976	*September 1986*	*Change between 1976 and 1986*		*Change between 1975 and 1985*	
			Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
North Western	66,893	61,143	−5,750	−8·6	164,147	36·2
South Western	44,389	43,686	−703	−1·6	94,122	30·0
Mersey	30,221	30,126	−95	−0·3	63,255	23·6
North West Thames[1]	43,421	43,710	289	0·7	36,142	9·4
Oxford	31,606	33,249	1,643	5·2	64,221	27·5
Northern	34,364	36,880	2,516	7·3	86,159	24·8
West Midlands	72,536	79,261	6,725	9·3	165,946	33·2
South West Thames[1]	30,295	36,073	5,778	19·1	48,077	16·2
Trent	50,885	60,842	9,957	19·6	164,224	39·7
South East Thames	45,797	56,768	10,971	24·0	97,004	24·0
East Anglian	22,031	27,860	5,829	26·5	75,708	43·4
Wessex	32,591	42,726	10,135	31·1	89,720	33·5
Yorkshire	34,689	46,597	11,908	34·3	113,910	28·2
North East Thames[1]	41,077	74,926	33,849	82·4	104,463	23·9

Health authority	Numbers of patients on in-patient waiting list				In-patient cases treated	
	September 1976	September 1986	Change between 1976 and 1986		Change between 1975 and 1985	
			Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage
SHA's[1]	7,469	8,054	585	7·8	10,964	13·7
England	588,264	681,901	93,637	15·9	1,378,062	27·7

[1] Figures for 1976 are not strictly comparable with those for 1986 because of NHS restructuring in 1982.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons on the hospital waiting list in Merseyside have been waiting for *(a)* more than six months, *(b)* more than a year and *(c)* more than two years; and if he will give comparable figures for each year since and including 1979.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. The information available centrally is given in the table.

Number of persons on in-patient waiting list as at 30 September, Merseyside District Health Authorities[1]
Number of non-urgent cases on waiting list for more than a year

Year	Number
1979	6,552
1980	5,916
1981	5,446
1982	6,108
1983	5,735
1984	4,269
1985	3,362
1986	3,592

[1] Liverpool DHA, St. Helens and Knowsley DHA, Southport and Formby DHA, South Sefton DHA and Wirral DHA.

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire on 19 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *787*, if he will now make a further statement regarding the pilot scheme operated by the West Midlands regional health authority on computerised hospital waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: The project is progressing. Selected groups of general practitioners are receiving monthly bulletins on waiting times for general surgery in the Region. Their referrals will be analysed to see whether information in this form affects decisions made about where best to refer patients. Groups of patients are being identified from amongst those referred by the selected general practitioners and they will be interviewed at various stages about their waiting experiences.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the numbers waiting for *(a)* hip joint and *(b)* knee joint operations.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. Waiting list information is held centrally by consultant department and not according to intended method of treatment.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each health authority the percentage rise or fall in the total hospital waiting list between September 1982 and March 1986, ordered so that the health authority with the biggest increase is first and that with the biggest decrease is last, giving the numbers waiting in each health authority at those two points.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 January 1987, c. *431-32*]: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list with national ranking by percentage change—NHS hospitals

District/Special health authority	September 1982	March 1986	Change September 1982 to March 1986	
			Number	Percentage
Milton Keynes[1]	6	2,121	2,115	35,250·0
Malton	7	319	312	4,457·1
Islington	1,098	2,410	1,312	119·5
West Essex	2,555	5,012	2,457	96·2
Huntington	471	840	369	78·3
Hounslow and Spelthorne	3,127	5,173	2,046	65·4
Airedale	1,686	2,649	963	57·1
Lewisham and North Southwark	5,335	8,243	2,908	54·5
Dartford and Gravesham	2,916	4,414	1,498	51·4
The Hospitals for Sick Children	1,456	2,197	741	50·9
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,475	2,219	744	50·4
Bloomsbury	9,632	14,405	4,773	49·6
Ealing	1,489	2,219	730	49·0
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	4,474	6,640	2,166	48·4
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	2,313	3,325	1,012	43·8
Harrogate	1,274	1,799	525	41·2
West Berkshire	3,256	4,593	1,337	41·1
Isle of Wight	1,349	1,854	505	37·4
Bexley	1,123	1,532	409	36·4
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	128	173	45	35·2
South West Surrey	2,385	3,210	825	34·6
Waltham Forest	3,271	4,341	1,070	32·7
City and Hackney	4,586	6,071	1,485	32·4

District/Special health authority	September 1982	March 1986	Change September 1982 to March 1986 Number	Percentage
West Suffolk	2,027	2,641	614	30·3
Worcester and District	2,651	3,449	798	30·1
Rochdale	2,342	3,033	691	29·5
North West Surrey	2,315	2,989	674	29·1
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	3,708	4,760	1,052	28·4
East Surrey	1,257	1,601	344	27·4
Hillingdon	6,009	7,648	1,639	27·3
North East Essex	3,510	4,413	903	25·7
Cheltenham	1,782	2,189	407	22·8
Kidderminster and District	1,070	1,298	228	21·3
East Dorset	4,361	5,290	929	21·3
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	2,167	2,617	450	20·8
South Cumbria	1,152	1,357	205	17·8
Lancaster	1,784	2,100	316	17·7
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,288	3,868	580	17·6
Chorley and South Ribble	651	764	113	17·4
South East Staffordshire	2,026	2,374	348	17·2
Trafford	1,301	1,522	221	17·0
Herefordshire	2,272	2,656	384	16·9
Brent	1,737	2,010	273	15·7
Barnet	3,628	4,186	558	15·4
The National Heart and Chest Hospital	1,073	1,231	158	14·7
West Norfolk and Wisbech	1,688	1,926	238	14·1
Tower Hamlets	6,003	6,808	805	13·4
West Dorset	2,015	2,264	249	12·4
Greenwich	2,362	2,632	270	11·4
Wolverhampton	3,677	4,094	417	11·3
Bristol and Weston	7,142	7,944	802	11·2
Mid Essex	3,246	3,610	364	11·2
Leicestershire	7,177	7,962	785	10·9
Canterbury and Thanet	4,136	4,588	452	10·9
Paddington and North Kensington	2,813	3,111	298	10·6
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	4,117	4,524	407	9·9
Rotherham	3,871	4,213	342	8·8
Swindon	2,825	3,063	238	8·4
Mid Surrey	2,150	2,327	177	8·2
Stockport	4,430	4,713	283	6·4
Exeter	4,436	4,719	283	6·4
West Lambeth	6,038	6,405	367	6·1
South Birmingham	6,878	7,291	413	6·0
South Warwickshire	3,194	3,366	172	5·4
Eastbourne	2,552	2,685	133	5·2
Hampstead	1,979	2,073	94	4·7
Southern Derbyshire	6,322	6,507	185	2·9
Basildon and Thurrock	5,888	6,044	156	2·6
North Staffordshire	8,862	9,023	161	1·8
Leeds Western	4,330	4,397	67	1·5
Central Manchester	5,358	5,436	78	1·5
Winchester	2,309	2,341	32	1·4
Brighton	3,863	3,915	52	1·3
Hastings	2,547	2,530	−17	−0·7
York	2,710	2,689	−21	−0·8
Moorfields Eye Hospital	1,458	1,446	−12	−0·8
East Suffolk	3,097	3,071	−26	−0·8
Somerset	4,949	4,904	−45	−0·9
Maidstone	2,190	2,157	−33	−1·5
South West Hertfordshire	1,986	1,956	−30	−1·5
Bromley	1,931	1,900	−31	−1·6
Northumberland	1,896	1,861	−35	−1·8
Kettering	2,848	2,790	−58	−2·0
Southend	3,248	3,177	−71	−2·2
Redbridge	1,719	1,673	−46	−2·7
Liverpool	8,553	8,321	−232	−2·7
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	3,698	3,589	−109	−2·9
Riverside	5,888	5,696	−192	−3·3
Bradford	6,663	6,411	−252	−3·8
Enfield	3,068	2,915	−153	−5·0
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	441	417	−24	−5·4
North Warwickshire	1,944	1,833	−111	−5·7
Salisbury	4,770	4,489	−281	−5·9
Hull	7,050	6,627	−423	−6·0
Southampton and South West Hampshire	9,080	8,492	−588	−6·5
Wigan	4,677	4,355	−322	−6·9
Worthing	3,756	3,455	−301	−8·0
Leeds Eastern	6,169	5,663	−506	−8·2

District/Special health authority	September 1982	March 1986	Change September 1982 to March 1986 Number	Percentage
North Hertfordshire	3,155	2,895	−260	−8·2
Crewe	5,128	4,695	−433	−8·4
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	6,831	6,247	−584	−8·5
South Bedfordshire	2,382	2,177	−205	−8·6
Shropshire	8,441	7,696	−745	−8·8
Wycombe	1,134	1,033	−101	−8·9
East Cumbria	3,323	3,018	−305	−9·2
East Berkshire	8,244	7,470	−774	−9·4
Plymouth	5,897	5,281	−616	−10·4
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	5,238	4,689	−549	−10·5
Preston	5,287	4,725	−562	−10·6
South Lincolnshire	4,428	3,948	−480	−10·8
Warrington	3,037	2,672	−365	−12·0
Gloucester	4,959	4,346	−613	−12·4
North Devon	1,558	1,358	−200	−12·8
Chichester	2,786	2,420	−366	−13·1
Oldham	5,071	4,381	−690	−13·6
Solihull	2,278	1,967	−311	−13·7
Walsall	3,324	2,856	−468	−14·1
Peterborough	3,770	3,239	−531	−14·1
Harrow	1,370	1,176	−194	−14·2
Mid Downs	2,621	2,233	−388	−14·8
Merton and Sutton	3,639	3,098	−541	−14·9
North Bedfordshire	2,657	2,255	−402	−15·1
Pontefract	2,569	2,179	−390	−15·2
Calderdale	1,166	986	−180	−15·4
Bolton	3,348	2,828	−520	−15·5
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	4,194	3,524	−670	−16·0
Southport and Formby	1,373	1,145	−228	−16·6
North Birmingham	2,723	2,267	−456	−16·7
Oxfordshire	7,003	5,792	−1,211	−17·3
Wandsworth	3,239	2,649	−590	−18·2
West Lancashire	2,433	1,984	−449	−18·5
Huddersfield	3,308	2,697	−611	−18·5
West Birmingham	4,269	3,479	−790	−18·5
Sandwell	1,721	1,399	−322	−18·7
Sheffield	14,678	11,903	−2,775	−18·9
Kingston and Esher	3,194	2,576	−618	−19·3
Sunderland	4,889	3,890	−999	−20·4
Tunbridge Wells	6,220	4,949	−1,271	−20·4
Camberwell	3,388	2,681	−707	−20·9
East Hertfordshire	1,847	1,456	−391	−21·2
Dudley	5,441	4,244	−1,197	−22·0
Cambridge	6,708	5,196	−1,512	−22·5
Salford	5,371	4,156	−1,215	−22·6
North Lincolnshire	4,129	3,158	−971	−23·5
Hartlepool	1,841	1,405	−436	−23·7
Northampton	6,793	5,164	−1,629	−24·0
Croydon	3,093	2,350	−743	−24·0
Central Nottinghamshire	7,154	5,425	−1,729	−24·2
Doncaster	6,132	4,641	−1,491	−24·3
Torbay	2,368	1,781	−587	−24·8
Bury	979	735	−244	−24·9
North Derbyshire	3,511	2,633	−878	−25·0
Newcastle	11,524	8,632	−2,892	−25·1
Southmead	2,958	2,214	−744	−25·2
Nottingham	10,988	8,215	−2,773	−25·2
South Manchester	8,120	6,012	−2,108	−26·0
Scarborough	2,200	1,611	−589	−26·8
East Birmingham	4,600	3,367	−1,233	−26·8
West Cumbria	1,870	1,349	−521	−27·9
Haringey	1,708	1,225	−483	−28·3
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	3,542	2,540	−1,002	−28·3
Wakefield	3,216	2,269	−947	−29·4
Darlington	3,140	2,214	−926	−29·5
North Tyneside	1,721	1,207	−514	−29·9
Central Birmingham	7,635	5,346	−2,289	−30·0
Mid Staffordshire	2,440	1,706	−734	−30·1
Coventry	8,759	6,091	−2,668	−30·5
Gateshead	1,661	1,155	−506	−30·5
North West Hertfordshire	2,697	1,848	−849	−31·5
Bassetlaw	1,185	809	−376	31·7
Bath	8,079	5,449	−2,630	−32·6
South East Kent	3,946	2,658	−1,288	−32·6
Northallerton	623	419	−204	−32·7

District/Special health authority	September 1982	March 1986	Change September 1982 to March 1986 Number	Change September 1982 to March 1986 Percentage
Wirral	4,714	3,138	−1,576	−33·4
South Tyneside	1,047	682	−365	−34·9
Medway	3,273	2,105	−1,168	−35·7
Norwich	10,980	6,915	−4,065	−37·0
Barnsley	3,934	2,463	−1,471	−37·4
South West Durham	803	498	−305	−38·0
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	3,294	2,042	−1,252	−38·0
Chester	2,940	1,805	−1,135	−38·6
Rugby	864	528	−336	−38·9
Frenchay	5,855	3,506	−2,349	−40·1
South Tees	10,319	6,149	−4,170	−40·4
Aylesbury Vale[1]	6,450	3,813	−2,637	−40·9
North Manchester	4,726	2,753	−1,973	−41·7
South Sefton	6,332	3,657	−2,675	−42·2
East Yorkshire	1,924	1,108	−816	−42·4
Tameside and Glossop	2,866	1,639	−1,227	−42·8
Dewsbury	1,181	661	−520	−44·0
Durham	1,489	820	−669	−44·9
Grimsby	2,355	1,245	−1,110	−47·1
Macclesfield	2,302	1,159	−1,143	−49·7
Newham	2,222	1,117	−1,105	−49·7
North West Durham	1,325	664	−661	−49·9
The Royal Marsden Hospital	331	164	−167	−50·5
Scunthorpe	4,609	2,030	−2,579	−56·0
North Tees	1,958	810	−1,148	−58·6

[1] The waiting list for Milton Keynes was formerly held by Aylesbury Vale Health Authority but was taken over by Milton Keynes Health Authority in 1984 following the development of Milton Keynes General Hospital. The above table shows a comparable reduction in the Aylesbury Vale figures.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of a prepayment certificate for National Health Service prescriptions in June 1979; and what were the effective dates of subsequent increases and the new cost in each case.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

Prescription prepayment certificates

	6 months £	4 months £	Annual £
1 April 1971	2·00	—	3·50
16 July 1979	4·50	—	8·00
1 April 1980	—	4·50	12·00
1 December 1980	—	5·50	15·00
1 April 1982	—	7·00	20·00
1 April 1983	—	7·50	21·50
1 April 1984	—	8·50	24·00
1 April 1985	—	11·00	30·50
1 April 1986	—	12·00	33·50
1 April 1987	—	12·50	35·00

Personal Social Services (Cost)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures showing the costs of the personal social services in the United Kingdom in 1985-86, distinguishing between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and also distinguishing between the main categories of expenditure.

Mr. Newton: Levels of gross current expenditure on the personal social services in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for 1985-86 are shown in the table. Although returns have not yet been received from all English authorities in relation to 1985-86, sufficient data are available to enable provisional figures to be provided.

Gross current expenditure on personal social services in the United Kingdom 1985-86 (£ million)[1]

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Residential (children)	300·1	11·8	28·0	4·9
Residential (other)	993·2	58·9	99·3	25·8
Domiciliary support	549·8	34·7	77·6	19·5
Day services and miscellaneous	494·0	25·2	59·7	34·0
Field work	446·2	22·3	82·2	17·1
Research and development	9·8	0·4	[2]	[2]
Total	2,793·1	153·3	346·8	101·0

[1] All figures provisional.
[2] Expenditure on research and development not separately identified.

Hospitals (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the longest period a patient has had to wait for treatment at St. Paul's eye hospital in Liverpool.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information required. Information on length of stay on the waiting list at individual hospitals is not available centrally. The hon. Member way wish to write to the chairman of the Liverpool health authority for the information he seeks.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 19 March *Offical Report*, column *625*, if he will list in the *Official Report* the voluntary organisations, including pressure groups and charities and professional associations *(a)* who wrote to

him and *(b)* with whom he had meetings in connection with his determination of the membership of the Health Education Authority.

Mr. Newton: Among the representations made to my right hon. Friend were those from the following voluntary and professional bodies:

Association of District Medical Officers
Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners
Institute of Environmental Health Officers
National Association of Health Authorities
National Consultative Committee of Health Education Officers
Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Society of Family Practitioner Committees
South East Thames Health Promotion Consortium and Group

No meetings were held with these organisations.

North West RHA (Finance)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he now proposes to make any additional financial resources available to the North West regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Regional health authorities were notified of their cash limits for 1978-88 in January. North Western regional health authority received a revenue increase of 5·6 per cent. In addition the region was allocated £1·2 million from the £15 million special fund we established to provide transitional help to those regions receiving less than average growth, bringing North Western Regional Health Authority's initial cash increase in 1978-88 to 5·7 per cent.

Since January further allocations totalling £2·6 million have been made. The largest of these was from the £25 million waiting list fund from which North Western received £2·3 million.

Nurses

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received against the proposal by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing and Midwifery to do away with enrolled nurses; and what consideration he is giving to the report.

Mr. Newton: I am not aware of any proposal to do away with enrolled nurses. However, we have received a number of representations expressing concern at the suggestion that enrolled nurse training should cease. This is one of a number of proposals on the future of nurse education and training put to Ministers by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting. We are now consulting health authorities and others on these proposals.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will answer the question on numbers of National Health Service nurses from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to which he gave a holding reply on 24 February, *Official Report*, column *236*.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member yesterday.

Chief Scientist

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the terms and conditions of appointment, including salary, of the chief scientist to his Department.

Mr. Newton: Professor Francis O'Grady's appointment is on a part-time advisory basis and took effect from 1 September 1986. He remains Professor of Microbiology at the University of Nottingham, which is responsible for his salary and is reimbursed for the five sessions a week that he devotes to his duties as chief scientist. The appointment is for two years initially with the possibility of an extension.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently on hospital waiting lists in the Trent regional health authority area.

Mr. Newton: For the latest centrally available information I refer the hon. Member to "Hospital In-Patient Waiting List, England" at 30 September 1986, national, regional and district summaries, copies of which have been placed in the Library. For current figures he may wish to write to the Chairman of the Trent regional health authority.

Child Abuse

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the problem of sexually abused children has been reviewed within his Department since Childline started operating; and if any new initiatives have been undertaken, or approaches to local authorities made, as a result.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 8 April at columns *240-41*.

National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1987-88 his estimate of the number of male and female employees expected to pay contributions at the 5 per cent., 7 per cent. and 9 per cent. rates, together with the forecast amount of the employers' and the employees' contributions at each rate; and if he will divide the figures between those contracted in and those contracted out.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

Estimated average number of contributors 1987-88
Great Britain

Class 1 standard rate	*per cent.*	*Men thousand*	*Women thousand*	*Total thousand*
Contracted out	5	—	100	100
	7	100	200	300
	9	6,200	2,500	8,700
Not contracted out	5	300	1,300	1,600
	7	400	1,300	1,700
	9	4,400	1,300	5,700

Estimated full year contributions yields payable in 1987-88
Great Britain

Class 1 standard rate	per cent.	Men Primary £ million	Men Secondary £ million	Women Primary £ million	Women Secondary £ million	Total Primary £ million	Total Secondary £ million	Total £ million
Contracted out	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	7	—	—	50	50	50	50	100
	9	5,100	5,500	1,550	1,450	6,650	6,950	13,600
Not contracted out	5	50	50	150	150	200	200	400
	7	150	150	350	350	500	500	1,000
	9	3,900	4,900	1,000	1,100	4,900	6,000	10,900

Notes:
(1) In one or two entries the apparent nil yield from contributions is caused by rounding.
(2) The secondary contributions paid at 9 per cent. includes secondary contributions paid at 10·45 per cent.
(3) All estimates are based on the assumptions used in the Report by the Government Actuary on the drafts of the Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order 1986 and the Social Security (Contributions Re-rating) (No. 2) Order 1986 (Cm. 24).

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply dated 25 March, *Official Report*, column *197*, concerning reduced rate national insurance contributions, if he will provide figures for the gross and net contributions taking into account the figures supplied on the same date in reply to a question asking for an update of table 40.13 of "Social Security Statistics 1985," 25 March, *Official Report*, column *198*.

Mr. Major: It is estimated that the abolition of the reduced rate paid by married women and widows would increase gross national insurance contribution revenue by £250 million during 1987-88. This would be offset by £50 million contracted out rebate on employees' contributions for those who are members of contracted-out superannuation schemes. The other information requested is as follows:

Estimated average number of contributors paying the reduced rate for Married Women, 1987-88 Great Britain.

	Thousands
Contracted Out	400
Not Contracted Out	700

Estimated full year contributions yields payable in respect of those paying the reduced rate for Married Women. Great Britain £ million 1987-88

	Primary	Secondary
Contracted Out	100	200
Not Contracted Out	100	200
Total	200	400

All estimates are based on the assumptions used in the Report by the Government Actuary on the drafts of the Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No 2) Order 1986 and the Social Security (Contributions Re-rating) (No 2) Order 1986 (Cm 24).

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will bring up to date for the year 1987-88 the information given in his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column 204, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby concerning the distribution of incomes and national insurance contributions, adding *(a)* the saving on the abolition of the reduced rate contribution, and *(b)* the numbers contracted-in and contracted out together with their contributions.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *195-96*]: The information on the distribution of incomes is as follows:

Estimated number of total earned incomes received by persons aged less than 65 by range of income: 1987-88 (Thousands). (United Kingdom).

Range of Total Earned Income (Lower Limit)	Single Persons	Married Couples without wife's Earned Income	Married Couples with wife's Earned Income
£3,000	767	67	51
£4,000	794	106	51
£5,000	981	165	57
£6,000	841	187	65
£7,000	794	210	101
£8,000	642	289	137
£9,000	521	301	203
£10,000	746	698	559
£12,000	453	760	1,009
£15,000	251	488	1,358
£20,000	130	315	1,121
TOTAL	6,919	3,588	4,711

Note: The sum of the components does not necessarily equal the totals because of rounding.

It is estimated that during 1987-88 £14·1 billion will be due from employers and £12·5 billion will be due from employees in respect of Class 1 National Insurance contributions, taking account of the lower contribution rates for those in contracted-out employment. If the upper earnings limit were abolished for employees' Class 1 National Insurance contributions in 1987-88, but retained for the contracted-out rebate, then the full year contributions yield would rise by £0·9 billion.

Assuming that during 1987-88 single persons paid 5 per cent. of earnings above £2,000 and married couples paid 4 per cent. of earnings over £5,000 and that other changes to the contributions system were as described in the hon. Member's earlier questions, then the gross yield from employees' contributions would be £5·3 billion. It is not possible to estimate the effect of the contracted-out rebate in these calculations and this figure therefore compares with an estimated notional gross yield during 1987-88 for primary Class 1 contributions under the existing rates structure of £14·1 billion.

I refer the hon. Member to my replies to him on 25 March 1987 at columns *197-98* for the information on the saving resulting from the abolition of the reduced rate contribution for certain married women and the numbers of contributors who are contracted in and out, and their contributions. Information on the number of married

women optants who are in contracted-out and not contracted employments, and their contributions, is presented in my other reply to him today.

All estimates are based on the assumptions used in the Report by the Government Actuary on the drafts of the Social Security Benefits Uprating (No. 2) Order 1986 and the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) (No. 2) Order 1986 (Cm 24).

Benefits

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reply he had made concerning representations by CIPFA on the proposed housing benefit reorganisation.

Mr. Lyell: None. CIPFA has made representations on the draft housing benefit regulations and on aspects of future subsidy arrangements for the new scheme. The Secretary of State is required formally to consult only the local authority associations but we have welcomed the many comments and suggestions received informally from CIPFA and other organisations. We are considering them carefully in the context of finalising the details of the new scheme.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what groups within the 1979 family expenditure survey were used to calculate the average expenditure on food, referred to in clause 1736 of the "Guidelines for Supplementary Benefit Officers and Procedural Instructions — Supplementary Benefits" (S Manual) in the calculation of the extra costs of special diets.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) on 23 March at columns *77-78*.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposed to lay regulations for the 1988 housing benefit reforms.

Mr. Major: I shall be writing to the local authority associations shortly.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons previously registering as unemployed and claiming unemployment or supplementary benefit have, in the last 12 months been transferred to sickness benefit claims.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987]: The information is not available in the form requested. The latest year for which figures are available is the year ending 30 March 1985. There were 236,000 spells of sickness starting in that year for which sickness benefit was claimed by people who had previously been unemployed.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions have been held with voluntary organisations concerning the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: On 1 April I met members of the Steering Committee set up by the major voluntary organisations representing disabled people to monitor implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. We discussed a number of issues relating to the implementation of the Act. Members of the steering committee suggested that voluntary organisations could make a valuable contribution to further consideration of these issues, and asked that they should be given an opportunity to do so. I undertook to consider what they had said, and to write to them as soon as possible suggesting a framework for involving voluntary organisation where appropriate in future work on the implementation of the Act.

Mrs. S. E. Parker

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate the reason why the Cannock Chase district council is not carrying out calculations to ascertain whether Mrs. S. E. Parker of 56 Park View Terrace, Rugeley, Staffordshire, is entitled to housing benefit supplement to enable his Department's Cannock office to ascertain her eligibility for exceptionally cold weather benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Entitlement to housing benefit supplement is first assessed by the relevant local authority who then refer the award to the supplementary benefit office for formal authorisation. The Department's Cannock office has now received and authorised an HBS award for Mrs. Parker and is therefore able to consider her claim for an exceptionally cold weather payment.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have *(a)* a powered and *(b)* a non-powered wheelchair on loan from the Department of Health and Social Security at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: At 31 March 1987, 461,806 non-powered wheelchairs and 19,994 powered wheelchairs, were on issue through the Department's wheelchair service. These figures do not accord exactly with the number of people who have a wheelchair on loan because some patients have more than one chair. No central figures of actual patient numbers are available.

Hip Operations

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action has been taken by the North West Thames regional health authority to speed up hip replacement operations; what was the percentage increase in total hip replacements over the period 1980 to 1984; and how this compared with the national increase.

Mr. Newton: The requested information is given in the table.

Estimated number of operations for total hip replacement or other arthroplasty of hip, NHS hospitals

	Estimated number		*Percentage change*
	1980	*1984*	*1980-84*
N W Thames Regional Health Authority	1,770	2,350	+32·8
England	33,420	37,970	+13·6

My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority for further information on its policy for hip replacement operations.

North West Thames RHA (Finances)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans the North West Thames regional health authority has to invest more money into expanding services for the elderly, mentally handicapped, the mentally ill and the very young; what financial allocation is being made to Hillingdon for 1987-88; and what was the comparable figure for 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority for details of the regional plans for future investment in the services listed, and the allocations to Hillingdon district health authority.

Housing (Greater London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the number of dwellings at the disposal of each district health authority in the Greater London area for use by their staffs at the end of 1982 and 1986, respectively.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Family Expenditure

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the average expenditures per week on food for the following supplementary benefit claimants as recorded by the family expenditure survey of 1979 *(a)* an adult, *(b)* a person 16 to 17 years old, *(c)* a child of 11 to 15 years old, and *(d)* a child under 11 years old.

Mr. Major: Data in the family expenditure surveys relate to expenditure by the household as a whole and cannot be allocated to individual members, for example dependent children. In the 1979 survey, the average recorded expenditure on food of one-adult households in receipt of supplementary benefit was £8·10. Sample data in respect of 16 to 17-year-old claimants living alone are insufficient to provide a reliable estimate.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* the cost of an average medical bed and, where appropriate, an average surgical bed, per year in *(a)* the West Middlesex community hospital, *(b)* the Ashford hospital, *(c)* Kingston hospital, *(d)* the Queen Mary's hospital, Roehampton, *(e)* the Teddington Memorial hospital and *(f)* St. Mary's hospital, Hampton.

Mr. Newton: Information is not collected centrally in this form. The cost returns submitted by health authorities to the Department show average costs per in-patient day for each hospital but do not distinguish between different categories of beds within hospitals.

In 1985-86 the average cost per in-patient day for the hospitals named was:

	£
West Middlesex Community Hospital	86·01
Ashford Hospital	77·15
Kingston Hospital	100·31
Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton	104·47
Teddington Memorial Hospital	47·81
St. Mary's Hospital, Hampton	46·38

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which district health authorities in the South West Thames and in the North West Thames regions pay under contractual arrangements for beds for those patients who do not need either nursing or medical care in private or voluntary residential or nursing homes; approximately how many beds are so provided by each authority; and if, in the case of each authority, he will state the average cost.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cunninghame, South claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested.

The Cunninghame, South constituency is covered by the Department's local office at Irvine although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims for maternity grant received at the Irvine local office during the 1986 calendar year was 1,451.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cunninghame, South received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,113 claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's office in Irvine which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are waiting for kidney dialysis treatment.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally. The treatment of individual patients is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctors concerned.

Health Care (Inequalities)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement of his policy towards social inequalities in health and health care provision.

Mr. Newton: The overall health of the nation has improved steadily amongst all social groups, and the Government have made significant increases in the resources available to the Health Service.

Unhealthy life-styles and unhealthy diets create major risks to health. The prevention of disease and the promotion of good health have always been primary

objectives of the Government's health policy. One of the Government's main aims in setting up the new Health Education Authority was to give a greater emphasis to disease prevention and health promotion. We are determined that all social groups, particularly the less well off, should have the information they need to protect their health. The first major campaign of the new authority, in conjunction with the Government, will be directed at coronary heart disease, which particularly affects people from lower socio-economic groups.

The Government remain committed to the principle of allocating health authority resources more fairly across the country using the resource allocation working party's approach. Substantial progress has been made in bringing regions closer to their RAWP targets, and this year no region is more than 4 per cent. below its target. The current review of the RAWP formula is looking, amongst other things, at whether the formula needs to be adjusted to make it more sensitive to the impact of social deprivation. An initial report on the review, published in December, recommended a further programme of research and analysis including further study of measures of the need for health care. This research is now under way.

Well Women Clinics

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the closure of family planning clinics and well women clinics in north Hertfordshire.

Mr. Newton: We have received eight representations from hon. Members, the North Hertfordshire community health council, and members of the public about the closure of family planning clinics and well women clinics in North Hertfordshire district health authority.

Harefield Hospital

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many patients can be treated in the thoracic medicine ward at Harefield hospital; what part this branch of medicine plays in the cardio-thoracic services provided by the hospital; and how many patients occupying beds in the ward are, on average, resident within the borough of Hillingdon.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of Hillingdon district health authority for information about the thoracic medicine ward at Harefield hospital.

Laurel Lodge Clinic, Hillingdon

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consult the North West Thames regional health authority concerning the resources allocated to Hillingdon district health authority for services provided by the Laurel Lodge Clinic, Harlington Road, Hillingdon; and if he will list the services provided and the degree of priority attached by the authorities concerned to their provision in the future.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may wish to contact the Chairman of Hillingdon district health authority for details of services provided at this clinic and any plans for its future.

Convalescent Care (Leeds)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that facilities for convalescent patients at the Grove hospital, Leeds are maintained; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of National Health Service convalescent care within the Leeds West health authority.

Mr. Newton: The level and extent of provision of beds for convalescence is a matter for individual health authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Leeds western health authority about convalescent care in Leeds western district health authority in general, and specifically provision at the Grove hospital, Leeds. Any proposals to change the current level of provision would require full public consultation in the usual way.

NHS (Convalescent Care)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the level of Government expenditure given to the National Health Service for convalescent care; and what percentage that is of total Government expenditure on the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: Provision for convalescent care is not separately identified in the cash allocations to regional health authorities. The level of funding within the overall resources available is decided by health authorities in the light of national policies and local needs.

For 1985-86, the costing returns submitted by health authorities in England showed total current expenditure on hospitals categorised as pre-convalescent and convalescent as £5·5 million. Figures for expenditure on convalescent care in other hospitals or in the community are not collected centrally.

Blindness and Partial Sight (Certificates)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has taken any decision on the proposals to revise and simplify the form BD8 used for certifying blindness and partial sight.

Mr. Major: I am now able to announce the outcome of the Department's consultation exercise on the revision of the BD8 form. We have decided that the form should be revised along the lines originally proposed by the Department, that is restricted to a simple certificate of blindness/partial sight containing no clinical information. A separate anonymised epidemiological return will be made to central Government.

In reaching this decision we are well aware of the concern of those responsible for follow-up and rehabilitation services for visually handicapped people—particularly social services departments — that they should not be deprived of information through lack of co-operation between the agencies concerned. Detailed inquiries made by the Department in several areas of the country have suggested that co-ordination between local agencies at the critical time when someone is certified as blind or partially sighted, is often not as close as it might be.

In order to improve this situation, and to ensure that service providers receive adequate information, we have

decided to establish a working group at national level to consider the principles of collaboration and communication to be observed between the various agencies involved in the provision of rehabilitation services to visually handicapped people. The working group will be chaired by a senior official from the Department, and representatives from health, social services, voluntary and consumer interests will shortly be invited to take part.

While the group will not be considering the content of the BD8 itself, its work will form the basis of guidance to accompany the revised form. The objective of this will be to encourage more effective co-operation between agencies over the way visual handicap is established and follow-up/rehabilitation services are triggered off. The group will be asked to consider what the resource implications of their recommendations might be.

The chairman will be asked to make his report within 6-9 months of the working group being set up. The current BD8 will be discontinued as soon as the working group's guidelines have been disseminated and the recommended procedures can be brought into effect.

The effect of those changes should be to ensure that medical confidentiality is not breached, but that social services departments and other service providers are nevertheless able to obtain the specific information they need in order to provide their respective services in the most effective way.

Family Planning and Pregnancy Counselling Projects

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Salisbury of 25 July 1986, *Official Report*, column 742, which district health authorities he has selected to mount the proposed family planning and pregnancy counselling projects for young people under 25 years of age.

Mr. Newton: We have selected projects in City and Hackney, South Sefton and Milton Keynes district health authorities to be supported by central funding until the end of the financial year 1988-89. The projects will be evaluated by Isobel Allen of the Policy Studies Institute.

Residential Care

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report of the joint central and local government working party on supplementary benefit and residential care.

Mr. Lyell: I have been informed that the working party now expects to complete its work by the end of May.

Pensions (Investor Protection)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now announced the investor protection arrangements for occupational and personal pensions.

Mr. Major: I have published today a paper setting out our proposals for the investor protection arrangements that will apply to personal pensions and contracted out money purchase occupational pension schemes under the Social Security Act 1986. Copies are available in the Library. The paper is being given a wide circulation to interested parties, and comments are invited by 11 May.

The investor protection proposals confirm that the Government intend to rely wherever practicable on the extensive investor protection regulatory framework provided by the Financial Services Act 1986. The marketing and selling of personal pensions will be subject to rules made under the Act, though separate arrangements are proposed for those types of pension scheme that do not fall within the scope of the Act. Administrative charges for personal pensions will not be controlled, at least for the time being, in the expectation that charges will stabilise at acceptable levels as a result of competition and disclosure.

For completeness, the paper also sets out the Government's proposals on investment controls and disclosure of information. Draft regulations on these subjects have already been published for comment.

In preparing the investor protection framework our aim has been to strike a balance between the need to safeguard scheme members' interests on the one hand and the necessity of ensuring that effective competition between pension providers is not hampered by over-regulation. We believe the balance is right, and I am glad to acknowledge the invaluable assistance we have received from members of the group convened by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to advise us on these matters.

SERPS (Rights)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he is making to inform people of the build-up of their rights in the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Major: I am pleased to say that, as promised in our White Paper "Reform of Social Security", we have launched a new service which will provide people, on request, with a personal statement of the value of their additional pension rights built up in the state earnings-related pension scheme. The statement will also include, where possible, estimates of how much additional pension the person might expect to earn by state pension age if he or she continues earning and remains in SERPS. We hope that this information will be helpful to people who may be considering taking out a personal pension. Application forms for this new service are in leaflet NP38 which can be obtained from the Department's local offices.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the overall and *(b)* the per capita spending on health each year since 1979 in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France and West Germany; and what percentage of each country's gross domestic product the overall spending represented.

Mr. Newton: The tables give the available information in respect of both total health spending, including that undertaken privately, and of public expenditure on health.

a.i Total Health Expenditure (in current United States $ million GDP Purchasing Power Parities)

	United Kingdom	France	Germany	United States
1979	21,317	36,561	40,387	315,052
1980	25,034	41,659	46,633	248,013
1981	28,472	47,638	52,518	285,828
1982	30,344	54,826	54,463	322,329
1983	34,346	56,977	n/a	355,400
1984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

a.ii Public Health Expenditure (in current United States $ million GDP Purchasing Power Parities)

	United Kingdom	France	Germany	United States
1979	19,281	26,443	32,691	90,860
1980	22,470	29,978	37,762	105,843
1981	25,476	34,241	42,400	121,667
1982	26,820	38,387	43,904	135,844
1983	30,374	40,599	n/a	148,783
1984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: OECD "Measuring Health Care 1960-1983" Tables A.1, H.7

b.i Per Capita Spending on health (in current United States $ GDP Purchasing Power Parities)

	United Kingdom	France	Germany	United States
1979	382·7	683·7	650·2	953·6
1980	446·6	775·6	757·4	1,089·0
1981	503·0	882·8	851·4	1,242·6
1982	538·6	996·4	883·6	1,387·5
1983	609·2	1,046·6	n/a	1,513·6
1984	638·0	1,145·0	1,079·0	1,637·0

b.ii Per Capita Spending on Public Health (in current United States $ million GDP Purchasing Power Parities)

	United Kingdom	France	Germany	United States
1979	343·0	494·5	532·8	403·7
1980	399·1	558·1	618·4	464·8
1981	451·9	634·5	687·4	528·9
1982	476·1	708·0	712·3	584·8
1983	538·8	745·6	n/a	634·5
1984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: OECD "Measuring Health Care 1960-1983" Tables A.1, H.1, H.7. "International Health Care Spending" George J. Schieber and Jean Pierre Poullier in Health Affairs 1986(4).

c.i Ratio of total health expenditure to GDP

	United Kingdom	France	Germany	United States
1979	5·3	8·3	7·8	9·0
1980	5·8	8·5	8·1	9·5
1981	6·1	8·9	8·3	9·7
1982	5·9	9·3	8·2	10·6
1983	6·2	9·3	n/a	10·8
1984	5·9	9·1	8·1	10·7

c.ii Ratio of public health expenditure to GDP

	United Kingdom	France	Germany	United States
1979	4·7	6·0	6·3	3·8
1980	5·2	6·1	6·5	4·1
1981	5·4	6·4	6·7	4·1
1982	5·2	6·6	6·6	4·5
1983	5·5	6·6	n/a	4·5
1984	5·2	6·4	6·3	4·4

Source: OECD "Measuring Health Care 1960-1983" Tables A.1, H.3. G. Schieber and Jean Pierre Poullier op. cit.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures available for the percentage of gross domestic product spent on health, health expenditure per head of population, number of practising doctors per 100,000 of the population and hospital beds per 1,000 population for the United Kingdom; and what information is available on comparable figures in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and the EEC on average, the United States of America and Sweden.

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the real growth in the United Kingdom in each year between 1978 and the latest year for which information is available of *(a)* total health spending per head and *(b)* public health spending per head; and what information he has about the equivalent figures for other member states in the European Economic Community and for Sweden and the United States of America.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1987, c. *302*]: The table shows the information requested so far as this is readily available. International comparisons of this kind are affected by different definitions of what constitutes health care and the relative costs of health care. These differences and many others mean that precise comparisons cannot be made.

	Ratio of public health expenditure to GDP 1983	*Ratio of total expenditure to GDP 1983*	*Public health[2] expenditure per capita US$ 1983*	*Total health[2] expenditure per capita US$ 1983*	*Practising[3] doctors per 100,000 population 1984*	*Hospital beds per 1,000 population 1983*	*Real growth of public health spending per head 1978-83*	*Real growth of total health spending per head 1978-83*
United Kingdom	5·5	6·2	538·8	609·2	222	[7]7·5	19·17	21·29
Belgium	6·0	6·5	636·4	689·6	275	[8]9·5	14·83	7·46
Denmark	5·6	6·6	646·6	765·3	251	7·4	7·28	7·62
France	6·6	9·3	743·6	1,046·6	226	11·6	19·22	20·19
Germany	[1]6·6	[1]8·2	[1]712·3	[1]883·6	252	[1]11·1	n.a.	n.a.
Greece	[2]3·4	4·7	203·8	256·9	[4]253	[6]6·2	18·71	16·54
Irish Republic	7·5	8·2	507·5	551·4	126	[9]9·7	24·15	16·64
Italy	6·2	7·4	537·1	641·0	[5]397	7·7	10·2	17·67
Luxembourg[9]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	174	13·0	n.a.	n.a.
Netherlands	6·9	8·8	709·1	859·3	215	12·0	10·72	9·41
Portugal	3·9	[1]5·7	174·3	[3]248·0	[3]220	[1]5·1	9·86	n.a.
Spain	4·4	[4]6·3	[3]382·0	[4]417·0	[4]301	[4]5·4	n.a.	n.a.
Sweden	8·8	9·6	1,188·6	1,298·9	241	14·0	12·29	12·28
USA	4·5	10·8	634·5	1,515·6	[4]194	[4]5·9	22·04	22·65

[1] 1982.
[2] Measured in 1983 current GDP purchasing power parity rates.
[3] *Source:* Number of physicians and dentists in the member states of the community statistical office of the European Communities 1986. For Portugal, Sweden and USA OECD report used. Definitions of practising doctors is not standard between countries.
[4] 1981.
[5] Including dentists.
[6] 1983.
[7] *Source:* DHSS statistics.
[8] 1980.
Source: OECD Measuring Health Care 1960-83.

Drugs and Medicines

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the conspicuousness of warning labels on those drugs which, when taken in combination with alcohol increase the risks of driving a motor vehicle.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 26 January 1987, c.927]: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory is at present carrying out a long-term research study into this complex question of causal links between medication and road accidents in collaboration with the national poisons centre at New Cross hospital. When the results are available, the Government will consider whether they should propose amendments to the Medicines (Labelling) Regulations. At present these Regulations require explicit warnings not to drive or operate machinery, and to avoid alcohol, on the labels of those anti-histamine medicines which are obtainable without a doctors' prescription; for prescription medicines the data sheets advise doctors of the particular precautions, warnings, and contra-indications, with a view to appropriate advice being given to the individual. Proposals to amend the Regulations would, under Section 129(6) of the Medicines Act, require consultations with those concerned, including the health professions and the pharmaceutical industry.

The Government will, of course, continue to stress the risk to drivers of alcohol itself.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what new funds are being allocated for occupational therapists' training to overcome the current shortage in qualified people to fill all the funded posts;

(2) how many funded positions for occupational therapists in the National Health Service and local authorities are at present vacant due to shortage of applicants.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1987 c. *211*]: The results of the most recent sample survey by health authorities suggest that nationally just under 13 per cent. of funded posts for occupational therapists were unfilled after three months at 31 March 1986. For information on numbers of vacancies in social service authorities I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 2 December 1986 at column *624*.

Pensions (Benefits)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners, and what percentage have

(i) other state benefits than retirement pensions, (ii) occupational pensions, (iii) state earning related pensions and (iv) income from savings which is in each case *(a)* £0 to £5 per week, *(b)* £5 to £10 per week, *(c)* £10 to £20 per week, *(d)* £20 to £30 per week, *(e)* £30 to £40 per week, *(f)* £40 to £50 per week, *(g)* £50 to £60 per week, *(h)* £60 to £70 per week, *(i)* £70 to £80 per week, *(j)* £80 to £90 per week, *(k)* £90 to £100 per week and *(l)* more than £100 per week.

Mr. Major *[pursuant to his reply, 26 March 1987, c. 259]*: The available information is shown in the tables. In *Table 1*, information on receipt of benefit other than retirement pensions, on occupational pensions and on savings is derived from the Family Expenditure Survey for 1985. It relates to numbers of pensioner tax units, which may be either single pensioners or married couples where the husband is aged 65 or over. It is not possible to include supplementary pension in those figures. *Table 2* expresses the information in Table 1 as a percentage of all pensioner tax units. *Table 3* shows the numbers of pensioner households in receipt of supplementary pension who are also in receipt of basic retirement pension, by level of supplementary pension received. These figures are for December 1984. They exclude households in receipt of supplementary pension who did not receive basic retirement pension (about 105,000), but include widows over 60 who have chosen to retain widows' pension. It is not possible to express these figures accurately as a percentage of all pensioners because of differences in the dates for which statistics are available. *Table 4* shows the numbers and percentages of individual pensioners receiving state earnings-related pension, at those levels for which information is available for September 1986. These figures are for net additional pension; they exclude guaranteed minimum pension, but include amounts of additional pension payable as a result of uprating to recipients of guaranteed minimum pensions.

Table 1

Number of pensioner tax units in receipt of income from various sources, 1985

Thousands

	Benefits other than state retirement pensions and supplementary benefit	*Occupational pensions*	*Savings*
All income levels	4,090	3,440	4,810
Less than £5	1,187	468	2,577
£5-£10	624	597	683
£10-£20	1,200	766	617
£20-£30	617	387	325
£30-£40	176	217	210
£40-£50	129	190	81
£50-£60	81	122	68
£60-£70	34	102	68
£70-£80	14	108	47
£80-£90	14	108	34
£90-£100	7	81	29
Over £100	—	285	163

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1985.

Table 2

Proportion of Pensioner Tax Units in Receipt of Income from Various Sources 1985

Per cent.

	Benefits other than state retirement pension and supplementary benefit	*Occupational pensions*	*Savings*
All income levels	60·3	50·7	70·9
£			
Less than			
5	17·5	6·9	38·0
5-10	9·2	8·8	8·9
10-20	17·7	11·3	9·1
20-30	9·1	5·7	4·8
30-40	2·6	3·2	3·1
40-50	1·9	2·8	1·2
50-60	1·2	1·8	1·0
60-70	0·5	1·5	1·0
70-80	0·2	1·6	0·7
80-90	0·2	1·6	0·5
90-100	0·1	1·2	0·3
Over 100	—	4·2	2·4

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1985

Table 3

Pensioners receiving supplementary pension in addition to basic retirement pension (numbers of claimants), December 1984

	Thousands
All income levels	1,578
£	
Less than 5	1,127
5-10	264
10-20	92
20-30	33
30-40	13
40-50	5
50-60	4
60-70	7
70-80	6
80-90	6
90-100	4
Over 100	17

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry, December 1984

Table 4

Number and proportion of pensioners in receipt of state earnings-related pension, September 1986

	Number of pensioners in receipt of state earnings-related pension (Thousands)	*Percentage of all pensioners in recipt of state earnings related pension* [1]
All income levels	1,799	18·5
£		
Less than 4·99	1,543	15·9
5-7·99	145	1·5
Over 8	110	1·5

Source: Retirement Pension Biannual Enquiry

[1]Expressed as a percentage of all pensioners, excluding those with graduated pension only.

Medicines

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he is taking to foster competition between drug manufacturing companies in the provision of medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *657*]: The Department encourages price competition in the supply of generic medicines to the National Health Service. For patented, branded medicines, to which normal market price competition does not generally apply, we operate a scheme to regulate the maximum level of profit which individual companies can achieve overall from supplying medicines to the National Health Service.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider whether the system of licensing and approving new improved drugs could be assisted by encouraging limited trials within the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *657*]: Most clinical trials conducted during the development of a new medicine already take place in the National Health Service. The extent of such trials must depend upon the nature of the information about the use of the medicine in patients that is required. Clinical trials are conducted in accordance with the Medicines Act 1968 and European legislation and are expected to take account of guidelines issued by the United Kingdom licensing authority and the European Community. The licensing authority, advised by expert scientific committees, must consider the safety, quality and efficacy of a medicine before licensing a medicinal product.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consult with doctors on whether further opportunities exist to reduce the number of drugs available on the limited list; if he will further consider the effects of such a reduction on patient care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1987, c. *657*]: The advisory committee on National Health Service drugs gives advice on the medicines which should be available for prescription under the National Health Service in the seven therapeutic categories covered by the selected list scheme, and we have no plans for consulting on their advice.

Health Education Council

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons who worked for the Health Education Council have resigned, or given notice of resignation, since Her Majesty's Government made clear their intention to abolish the Health Education Council; what positions they held; and what percentage they represent of staff at each occupational grade.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987 c. *306*]: In the four months following the announcement to reconstitute the Council, 16 members of staff resigned. The resignations represented 25 per cent. of managerial, 16 per cent. of professional and 23 per cent. of support staff. The positions held were:

Audio copy typists (2)
Assistant director (Professional Development)
Assistant secretary
Clerk
Executive assistant
Film and broadcast officer
Liaison assistant
Liaison officer
Personal assistants (3)
Publication officers (2)
Research officers (2)

It should however be noted that resignations from the HEC staff, which averaged about one or two per quarter until the spring of 1986, rose sharply to 7 in the April-June 1986 quarter and 5 in the June-September 1986 quarter, and appeared to be maintained at a higher average level than formerly.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 22 April 1987

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Spearing asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* for each of the Sessions 1979-80 onward and the Session 1986 to date, the number of pages of statute relating to the powers and finances of local authorities in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland and the approximate time spent in proceedings of the House (i) in Standing Committees and (ii) on the Floor in each Session, itemised as convenient by the principal items of legislation.

Mr. Biffen: The information is not held centrally in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

"Official Report"

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Lord Privy Seal why there is a considerable delay in the publication of the bound volumes of the *Official Report*; and when he anticipates that the issues will be brought up to date.

Mr. Biffen: The bound volume is published by HMSO and printed at HMSO Hansard Press, which also has responsibility for production of the daily part. While the House is sitting, priority is necessarily given to the latter.

At present the bound volume is published five to six months after the relevant daily part. Alternative methods are currently being considered which should lead to some improvement in the speed of production. However, because of the various stages involved (copy preparation, text amendment, indexing, printing and binding), bound volumes are never likely to be produced within four months of the date of publication of the daily part.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Alexander asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the three documents referred to in his answer of 28 October 1986, *Official Report*, column *114*, containing proposals which were adopted by the European Community Council of Ministers before the House had debated them.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is as follows:

European Community documents 10697/84 and 10171/84, on the conservation of fishery resources and total allowable fish catches for 1985, respectively, and an unnumbered explanatory memorandum on heat treated milk, dated 26 June 1985.

European Community Legislation

Mr. Alexander asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list all the European Community documents brought before the House in 1985 and referred to in his answer of 28 October 1986, *Official Report*, column *84*.

Mr. Biffen: The titles of European Community documents laid before the House are published in the House of Commons "Weekly Information Bulletin", copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. John O'Sullivan

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister in what capacity Mr. John O'Sullivan has been employed in her office; whether his appointment has been subject to approval by the Civil Service Commission; what terms and conditions apply to his appointment; and if his salary will be paid out of public funds.

The Prime Minister: Mr. John O'Sullivan is employed as a special adviser in the policy unit in my Office. He is employed on the standard terms applied to special advisers. The approval of the Civil Service Commission is not required, and in common with all such appointments his salary is met from public funds.

HOME DEPARTMENT

"Legislating for Change"

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a statement on the consultative document "Legislating for Change," published by the Equal Opportunities Commission, and on which comments were requested by 28 February.

Mr. Waddington: We are not proposing to make a statement on this document because it is a consultative paper issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission to help it decide what proposals to put to the Government for changes in the law. Together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment we will consider how to respond when we receive the commission's report setting out its considered proposals for change and have been able to consider it.

Monzur-Al-Kassar

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the state of police investigations of Monzur-Al-Kassar for arms and drugs offences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Monzur-Al-Kassar is not being investigated by the police.

Prison Population

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of unconvicted inmates in prisons in England and Wales on 31 March.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 March 1987 about 8,770 untried and 330 non-criminal prisoners were in prison department establishments in England and Wales.

Mr. Viraj Mendis

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Manchester about violence and damage

caused in the vicinity of the Church of the Ascension, Royce road, Hume, Manchester, in connection with Mr. Viraj Mendis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The chief constable informs me that two incidents have been reported to the police. On 9 March a group of people entered the church and engaged in scuffles with supporters of Mr. Viraj Mendis, one of whom sustained minor injuries. Six men were later arrested on suspicion of assault, but as none was positively identified all were released without charge. On 10 March a woman living nearby informed the police that she had been attacked on her way home. The matter has been investigated by the police, but so far the alleged assailants have not been traced.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received in respect of the proposed removal of Viraj Mendis, a Sri Lankan currently staying in the United Kingdom *(a)* from hon. Members and *(b)* from others.

Mr. Waddington: By 13 April 1987, 48 hon. and right hon. Members and four Members in another place had made representations. More than 800 other letters have been received about the case, as well as two petitions and about 1,500 proforma postcards.

Visa Applications

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Indian citizens have applied for visas at the British deputy high commission, Bombay, by month, since 15 October 1986, as *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; how many of these applications were (i) granted, (ii) refused and (iii) referred to further inquiries, by category of applicant; and how many of those applications in each category were dealt with by post and how many required personal interview;

(2) how many Indian citizens have applied for visas at the British high commission, New Delhi, by month since 15 October 1986, as *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; how many of these applications were (1) granted, (2) refused and (3) deferred for further inquiries, by category of applicant; and how many of these applications in each category were (i) dealt with by post and (ii) required personal interview;

(3) how many Bangladeshi citizens have applied for visas in Dhaka, by month since 15 October 1986, as *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; how many of these applications were (i) dealt with by post and (ii) required personal interview; and how many of these applications were (1) granted, (2) refused and (3) deferred for further inquiries, by category of applicant;

(4) how many Pakistani citizens have applied for visas at the British embassy, Islamabad, by month since 15 October 1986, as *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; how many of those applications in each category (i) were dealt with by post and (ii) required personal interview; and how many of these applications were (1) granted, (2) refused and (3) deferred to further inquiries, by category of applicant;

(5) how many Pakistani citizens have applied for visas at the British consulate, Karachi, by month since 15 October 1986, as *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; how many of those applicants in each category (i) were dealt with by post and (ii) required personal interview; and how many of those applications were (1) granted, (2) refused and (3) deferred for further inquiries, by category of applicant.

Mr. Waddington: The information available centrally is given in the following table.

Applications for visas to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	*Granted[2]*	*Refusal initially*	*Deferred[3]*
DHAKA				
Visitors:				
1986 October[4]	780	540	180	10
November	860	590	230	10
December	680	430	200	20
1987 January	460	320	110	20
February	450	320	90	20
Students:				
1986 October[4]	30	20	10	*
November	10	10	*	*
December	60	40	10	*
1987 January	80	60	20	*
February	40	30	*	*
Persons for settlement:				
1986 October[4]	310	250	60	110
November	440	360	80	330
December	290	340	110	320
1987 January	290	290	80	390
February	410	400	80	210
Others:				
1986 October[4]	110	100	*	10
November	130	120	*	10
December	120	120	*	—
1987 January	70	70	*	10

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	Granted[2]	Refusal initially	Deferred[3]
February	30	30	*	—
Total:				
1986 October[4]	1,230	900	240	120
November	1,440	1,080	310	460
December	1,150	940	310	320
1987 January	910	730	210	420
February	930	800	180	230

Applications for visas to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	Granted[2]	Refusal initially	Deferred[3]
BOMBAY				
Visitors:				
1986 October[4]	3,590	3,410	10	110
November	2,410	2,340	50	10
December	1,920	1,780	40	*
1987 January	1,560	1,390	30	*
February	1,900	1,690	40	20
Students:				
1986 October[4]	210	150	—	—
November	10	10	—	*
December	40	40	—	—
1987 January	20	20	—	—
February	30	30	—	—
Persons for settlement:				
1986 October[4]	160	190	30	140
November	160	170	20	30
December	180	180	30	50
1987 January	210	170	40	110
February	240	140	20	50
Others:				
1986 October[4]	160	160	—	*
November	190	190	—	10
December	200	190	*	*
1987 January	100	100	*	*
February	430	420	*	10
Total:				
1986 October[4]	4,120	3,900	40	360
November	2,780	2,710	70	40
December	2,330	2,200	70	50
1987 January	1,880	1,670	70	110
February	2,610	2,290	60	80

Applications for visas to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	Granted[2]	Refusal initially	Deferred[3]
NEW DELHI				
Visitors:				
1986 October[4]	2,960	2,590	50	20
November	2,780	2,480	150	40
December	1,820	1,630	160	70
1987 January	1,850	1,580	200	80
February	2,100	1,780	180	80
Students:				
1986 October[4]	80	80	*	—
November	20	20	*	*
December	50	50	*	*
1987 January	80	80	*	*
February	40	40	*	*

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	Granted[2]	Refusal initially	Deferred[3]
Persons for settlement:				
1986 October[4]	90	90	30	60
November	70	100	50	60
December	120	80	40	50
1987 January	120	80	60	70
February	150	100	60	50
Others:				
1986 October[4]	550	550	—	•
November	650	640	•	•
December	350	350	—	10
1987 January	190	200	•	—
February	220	200	—	10
Total:				
1986 October[4]	3,690	3,310	80	90
November	3,520	3,230	200	100
December	2,340	2,100	200	120
1987 January	2,240	1,940	260	150
February	2,500	2,120	240	140

Applications for visas to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	Granted[2]	Refusal initially	Deferred[3]
ISLAMABAD				
Visitors:				
1986 October[4]	1,580	1,450	80	40
November	1,880	1,640	150	110
December	1,890	1,590	210	130
1987 January	1,520	1,190	180	100
February	1,700	1,350	160	140
Students:				
1986 October[4]	20	20	—	—
November	30	20	•	•
December	70	60	10	•
1987 January	70	60	10	10
February	20	20	•	•
Persons for settlement:				
1986 October[4]	570	380	110	270
November	480	260	100	290
December	710	200	80	340
1987 January	430	320	120	420
February	420	350	140	420
Others:				
1986 October[4]	20	20	—	•
November	20	20	—	•
December	30	30	—	•
1987 January	60	50	•	•
February	20	20	•	10
Total:				
1986 October[4]	2,180	1,860	190	310
November	2,420	1,940	250	410
December	2,700	1,880	300	470
1987 January	2,080	1,620	310	530
February	2,160	1,740	300	570

Applications for visas to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	Granted[2]	Refusal initially	Deferred[3]
KARACHI				
Visitors:				
1986 October[4]	1,930	1,800	70	40

	Applications			
	Newly[1] received	*Granted[2]*	*Refusal initially*	*Deferred[3]*
November	2,040	1,910	100	40
December	1,430	1,270	120	50
1987 January	1,250	1,110	110	30
February	1,210	1,050	110	40
Students:				
1986 October[4]	10	10	*	*
November	20	20	—	*
December	*50	50	*	*
1987 January	40	40	*	*
February	20	20	*	*
Persons for settlement:				
1986 October[4]	50	20	*	20
November	20	10	*	30
December	20	20	*	10
1987 January	40	20	*	20
February	40	10	10	10
Others:				
1986 October[4]	310	310	—	*
November	240	230	*	10
December	230	220	—	20
1987 January	220	200	—	20
February	170	160	*	20
Total:				
1986 October[4]	2,300	2,150	70	70
November	2,320	2,170	110	80
December	1,730	1,550	120	80
1987 January	1,560	1,370	120	70
February	1,440	1,250	130	70

* Five or fewer.
[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[2] Including applications granted on appeal.
[3] Including applications referred to the Home Office for decision.
[4] Including applications for entry clearance in the period 1-14 October 1986.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications for visas have been made at the British high commission in Lagos since 11 February; how many of these applications were *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* deferred for further inquiries, by category of applicant; and how many of those applications in each category were dealt with by post and how many required personal interview;

(2) How many Nigerian citizens applied for visas at the British high commission in Lagos from 1 February 1987 until the visa office was closed; and how many of these were for *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; how many visas have been issued in Lagos in urgent compassionate cases since 11 February; and how many of those applications in each category (i) were dealt with by post and (ii) required personal interview.

Mr. Waddington: Provisional information indicates that about 2,200 applications for visas were received in Lagos in the two weeks ending 14 February 1987; about 1,800 applications were granted and 120 refused. In the following two weeks 60 applications were granted and fewer than five were refused. The other information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long each of the 51 people, whose cases are currently being considered, and who applied for visas at the British high commission, Colombo, on the grounds that they were suffering severe hardship, waited before a decision was made on their application; when each of the 14 people whose applications for visas on the grounds of severe hardship in Colombo are still under consideration applied for these visas, and what guidance has been issued to the staff at the British high commission in Colombo as to the criteria to be used in deciding on applications for visas on the ground of severe hardship.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Ghanaian citizens have applied for visas at the British high commission, Accra, by month since 23 October 1986, as *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; how many of those applications in each category (i) were dealt with by post and (ii) required personal interview; and how many of these applications were (1) granted, (2) refused and (3) deferred for further inquiries, by category of applicant.

Mr. Waddington: The information available centrally is given in the following table.

Applications in Ghana for a visa to the United Kingdom
Number of persons

Category of applicant, and month	*Applications*		
	Newly received[1]	*Granted[2]*	*Refused initially*
Visitors:			
1986 October[3]	670	550	90
1986 November	1,710	1,420	210

Category of applicant, and month	Applications		
	Newly received[1]	Granted[2]	Refused initially
1986 December	930	790	130
1987 January	950	560	320
Students:			
1986 October[3]	30	10	10
1986 November	20	10	10
1986 December	20	20	+
1987 January	40	20	10
Others:[4]			
1986 October[3]	30	20	20
1986 November	60	40	10
1986 December	40	40	+
1987 January	70	60	–
Total:			
1986 October[3]	720	580	120
1986 November	1,780	1,460	230
1986 December	990	850	130
1987 January	1,060	640	330

+ 5 or fewer.
[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[2] Including applications granted on appeal.
[3] Including applications for an entry certificate in the period 1-22 October 1986.
[4] Including persons for settlement.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Nigerian citizens have applied for visas at the British deputy high commission, Kaduna, from February to the latest convenient date as *(a)* visitors, *(b)* students, *(c)* settlement and *(d)* others; and how many of these applications were (i) granted, (ii) refused and (iii) deferred for further inquiries by category of applicant.

Mr. Waddington: The information available centrally is given in the following table.

Applications in Kaduna in February 1987 for a visa to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Category of applicant	Applications		
	Newly received[1]	Granted[2]	Refused initially
Visitors	870	760	20
Students	10	10	+
Others[3]	20	20	–
	900	790	20

+ 5 or fewer.
[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[2] Including applications granted on appeal.
[3] Including persons for settlement.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 80 unsuccessful applications for entry clearance from female fiancées in the Indian subcontinent were refused *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly because the entry clearance officer was not satisfied that the primary purpose of the marriage was not immigration.

Mr. Waddington: Of the 80 female fiancées refused entry clearance in the Indian subcontinent in 1986, 10 were refused solely on the ground that the primary purpose of the marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom and 10 were refused partly on that ground.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the *(a)* 480 unsuccessful applications from husbands and *(b)* 1,000 unsuccessful applications from male fiancés for entry clearance in the Indian subcontinent in 1986 were refused *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly because the entry clearance officer was not satisfied that the primary purpose of the marriage was not immigration.

Mr. Waddington: Of the 480 husbands and 1,000 male fiancés refused in the Indian subcontinent in 1986, 430 of the husbands and 840 of the male fiancés were refused solely on the grounds that the primary purpose of the marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom, and 20 of the husbands and 120 of the male fiancés were refused partly on these grounds.

Tamils

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of Sri Lanka concerning *(a)* the fate of Tamils returned to Sri Lanka who have been refused entry to other countries in Europe and elsewhere and *(b)* the situation of Viraj Mendis, a Sri Lankan currently staying in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: When I met President Jayewardene and the Minister for National Security on 13 April I was given an assurance that no Sri Lankan national returning to Sri Lanka need fear for his treatment at the hands of the Sri Lankan authorities. Unless wanted on a criminal charge, they would be allowed free and unrestricted entry and freedom to go about their business.

US Service Men

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables in England into the number of illegal acts by United States service men stationed in the United Kingdom and reported to the police but in relation to which no action was taken because of immunity under the Visiting Forces Act.

Mr. Mellor: The Visiting Forces Act 1952 does not grant any general immunity from United Kingdom legal process. In certain cases it permits the authorities of a visiting force to exercise primary jurisdiction; but if those authorities do not deal with the case under their law, any offence against United Kingdom law remains open to prosecution in our courts.

We have received no reports from United States forces on this matter, although there is liaison at local level with the police. We do not think it necessary to ask the police to record specially, and report to the Home Office, offences alleged to have been committed by members of the United States forces.

Nigerian Citizens (Entry Refusal)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Nigerian citizens seeking entry as *(a)* visitors and *(b)* students were refused entry at Heathrow airport in each month from 1 September 1986 to 1 February 1987; and how many of those had obtained a visa before travelling.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to the number of Nigerian citizens arriving at Heathrow airport who were removed, after being refused entry, in the months of September 1986 to January 1987 inclusive and of those the number who had a work permit or entry clearance. Visitors and students cannot be separately identified in these figures. Citizens of Nigeria were not subject to an overall requirement to obtain entry clearance before travelling to the United Kingdom until 1 February 1987.

Citizens of Nigeria refused leave to enter and removed at Heathrow Airport, September 1986 to January 1987

Number

Month of removal	*Refused and removed*	*of which with a work permit or entry clearance*
1986		
September	141	1
October	132	—
November	69	1
December	63	—
1987		
January	85	—

Overseas Voters

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the issue of overseas voters registration forms to *(a)* political parties, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* other bodies; what guidance he gives to such bodies concerning matter sent out with such forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy is to make overseas electors' declaration forms as widely available as possible to political parties, voluntary organisations and other bodies. We would not wish these bodies, apart from party political organisations, to distribute the forms with party political material, and we are reviewing the need for guidance to be given to that effect. We are aware of only one case where this has occurred.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what complaints he has received concerning alleged abuses of procedures for the registration of overseas voters.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Apart from the complaint by the hon. and learned Member in his letter to me of 8 March, none.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have so far applied for registration as overseas voters; in which countries; in respect of which constituencies; and by what means such forms were made available to them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The table has been prepared by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the basis of information from posts abroad. It shows the total number of people whose applications for registration as an overseas elector in the 1987 register have been attested by consular or other authorised staff, and the country in which the application was attested.

Information is not available on the constituencies in respect of which applications were made. However, I am sending to the hon. Member a table prepared by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys from returns made by electoral registration officers, which provides this information in respect of overseas electors whose names are included on the 1987 electoral register. There is no record of the means by which each overseas elector obtained a declaration form, but we expect that most forms were obtained from British posts abroad.

Electoral registration overseas: 1986
(for electoral register coming into force 16 February 1987)
Number of attestations

	Number
Afghanistan	9
Algeria	7
Angola	4
Anguilla	3
Antigua and Barbuda	18
Argentina	2
Ascension	0
Australia	228
Austria	78
Bahamas	71
Bahrain	127
Bangladesh	22
Barbados	36
Belgium	331
Belize	7
Bermuda	34
Bolivia	3
Botswana	142
Brazil	77
Brunei	127
Bulgaria	4
Burma	3
Cameroon	19
Canada	99
Caymen Islands	34
Chile	6
China	63
Colombia	5
Congo	1
Costa Rica	8
Cuba	2
Cyprus	193
Czechoslovakia	2
Denmark	36
Dominica	5
Ecuador	8
Egypt	83
Equatorial Guinea	1
Ethiopia	36
Falkland Islands	24
Fiji	59
Finland	14
France	507
Gabon	24
Gambia	11
German Democratic Republic	2
Federal Republic of Germany	444
Ghana	33
Gibraltar	14
Greece	148
Grenada	10
Guatemala	4
Guyana	6
Honduras	0
Hong Kong	311
Hungary	2
Iceland	1
India	43
Indonesia	145
Iran	6
Iraq	34
Ireland, Republic of	58
Israel	54
Italy	237
Ivory Coast	21
Jamaica	36

	Number
Japan	114
Jordan	47
Kenya	181
Kiribati	3
Korea, Republic of	44
Kuwait	135
Lebanon	0
Lesotho	40
Liberia	20
Libya	—
Luxembourg	46
Madagascar	4
Malawi	54
Malaysia	147
Malta	59
Mauritius	18
Mexico	15
Mongolia	1
Montserrat	2
Morocco	15
Mozambique	14
Nepal	43
Netherlands	243
New Zealand	141
Nigeria	80
Norway	138
Oman	332
Pakistan	37
Panama	0
P.N.G.	215
Paraguay	9
Peru	45
Philippines	62
Poland	18
Portugal	113
Qatar	193
Romania	0
St. Helena	8
St. Kitts and Nevis	2
St. Lucia	20
St. Vincent	15
Saudi Arabia	811
Senegal	38
Seychelles	10
Sierra Leone	55
Singapore	284
Solomon Islands	36
Somalia	2
South Africa	499
Soviet Union	11
Spain	1,573
Sri Lanka	38
Sudan	14
Swaziland	23
Sweden	53
Switzerland	206
Syria	2
Tanzania	82
Thailand	84
Tonga	2
Trinidad and Tobago	23
Tunisia	15
Turkey	45
Turks and Caicos Islands	2
Uganda	35
United Arab Emirates Abu Dhabi	234
Dubai	225
United States of America	656
Uruguay	4
Vanuatu	13
Venezuela	19
Vietnam	—
Virgin Islands, British	2
Yemen Arab Republic	26
Yemen, Peoples Democratic Republic	6
Yugoslavia	5
Zaire	18
Zambia	102
Zimbabwe	99
Total	12,207

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Paddy Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Somerset in relation to emergency preparedness for a civil nuclear disaster at Hinkley Point power station, as to whether any time estimates have been made for (i) the evacuation of the population, (ii) the evacuation of high-risk groups, (iii) the evacuation of low mobility groups and (iv) the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population, within 10 miles of Hinkley Point in each case.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

The precautions taken in the design and construction of nuclear installations in this country, and the very high safety standards applied in operating and maintaining them, make it highly unlikely that accidents will occur which might significantly affect the public. But however remote the risks, all operators of nuclear installations are required by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive, as a condition of its site licences, to prepare emergency plans, including those for dealing with an accidental release of radioactivity. The same requirement also applies to the sites of the Atomic Energy Authority.

These plans, on which the police and other involved bodies must be consulted, are tested regularly in exercises monitored by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. They cover both emergency procedures at the site and offsite arrangements to protect the public, including monitoring up to 40 km. and evacuation up to 1 km. for later magnox and AGR stations and 1·5 miles for earlier magnox stations. These plans are capable of extension in the improbable event of this proving necessary, but the HSE does not consider that detailed plans covering a wider area are justified. It believes that a balance needs to be struck between detailed plans that are sufficiently extensive to cope with a serious accident and the unjustified use of resources involved in planning for improbable accidents. This approach was specifically endorsed by Sir Frank Layfield in his report on Sizewell. It follows that the specific calculations and assessments sought have not been made.

In an announcement on 18 December following the first stage of a thorough review of existing plans and procedures in the light of experience of the Chernobyl accident, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister concluded that existing plans continue to provide a valid basis for the response to any accident in the United Kingdom. In announcing his consent to the planning application for Sizewell B, the Secretary of State accepted the Layfield report's recommendations relating to emergency planning. These will be taken fully into account in the continuing work on the Government review.

The duties and responsibilities of police forces are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Bilingual Forms

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will amend regulation 11 of the Registration of Births, Still-births and Deaths (Welsh Language) Regulations 1969 so as to enable a registrar to write the Welsh equivalent of the words contained in a coroner's certificate when drawing up a death certificate.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

No. The Registration of Births, Still-births and Deaths (Welsh Language) Regulations 1969 provide for a death in Wales upon which an inquest has been held to be registered in Welsh as well as in English where the coroner's certificate has been completed in both languages. The registrar is required to copy the particulars contained in the certificate precisely as they are stated therein. In this respect as with all registrations, responsibility for the accuracy of the particulars required to be registered remains with the person who provides the information and there are no plans to change this general principle.

WALES

Core Curriculum

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes a core curriculum for schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) on 9 April, at column *371*, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Higher Education (Part-time Students)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total full-time equivalent number of part-time students in higher education in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information, in respect of part-time students at the University of Wales and student enrolments on advanced courses at colleges of further and higher education in Wales, is as follows:

Academic Year	*Number[1] (Full-time equivalent)*
1979-80	2,178
1980-81	2,357
1981-82	2,430
1982-83	2,433
1983-84	2,496
1984-85	2,528
1985-86	2,813

[1] Including evening only enrolments.

School Closures

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by local education authority, the number of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Wales which have closed since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Comprehensive information in the form requested is not available. A figure for the total number of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools closed could be misleading since many closures occur as part of wider schemes of reorganisation or amalgamation which can incorporate the establishment of new schools. During the period January 1979 to January 1987 there was a net reduction of 168 maintained primary schools and a net reduction of 10 maintained secondary schools in Wales. (These are provisional figures). The breakdown by local education authority is as follows:

	Primary	*Secondary*
Clwyd	−15	−1
Dyfed	−31	−2
Gwent	−47	−7
Gwynedd	−2	0
Mid Glamorgan	−7	+1
Powys	−16	+1
South Glamorgan	−18	−1
West Glamorgan	−32	−1
	−168	−10

Handicapped Pupils (Ancillary Staff)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table giving the numbers of ancillary staff provided in schools in Wales by local education authorities to look after the special needs of handicapped pupils for each year since 1981.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The numbers of nursing, child care and other ancillary staff in special schools, as at September of each year, are given in the following table. Comparable information in respect of ancillary staff catering for pupils with special needs in primary and secondary schools is not collected centrally.

Ancillary Staff in Special Schools

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Clwyd	89	103	98	98	113	105
Dyfed	37	42	48	43	45	48
Gwent	83	76	79	83	74	86
Gwynedd	48	38	35	40	37	43
Mid Glamorgan	126	123	131	119	132	134
Powys	12	13	13	14	14	18
South Glamorgan	142	118	118	112	96	115
West Glamorgan	59	59	51	68	73	68

Schools (Expenditure)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing expenditure per pupil in both cash and current price terms for *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools for each local authority in Wales for 1979, 1983 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following tables.

Welsh counties	1979-80 outturn prices £	1979-80 1985-86 prices[2] £	1983-84 outturn prices £	1983-84 1985-86 prices[2] £	1985-86 outturn prices £	1985-86 1985-86 prices[2] £
Net recurrent institutional costs per primary pupil[1]						
Clwyd	416	673	727	806	795	795
Dyfed	464	750	772	855	837	837
Gwent	435	703	750	831	792	792
Gwynedd	414	669	715	792	806	806
Mid Glamorgan	440	712	788	873	864	864
Powys	532	860	879	974	972	972
South Glamorgan	421	681	682	756	741	741
West Glamorgan	508	821	807	894	874	874
Net recurrent institutional costs per secondary pupil[1]						
Clwyd	570	922	996	1,104	1,131	1,131
Dyfed	603	975	970	1,075	1,124	1,124
Gwent	606	980	1,029	1,140	1,204	1,204
Gwynedd	578	935	961	1,065	1,125	1,125
Mid Glamorgan	606	980	979	1,085	1,120	1,120
Powys	640	1,035	1,037	1,149	1,235	1,235
South Glamorgan	598	967	961	1,065	1,092	1,092
West Glamorgan	670	1,083	1,140	1,263	1,301	1,301

[1] Net recurrent institutional costs exclude expenditure on school meals and milk, school transport and pupil support.
[2] Outturn prices revalued using the GDP deflator.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Capital Receipts and Allocations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give figures for the latest convenient year of *(a)* the level of capital receipts and *(b)* the level of capital allocations for each local education authority in Britain expressed on a per student basis.

Mr. Dunn: The latest year for which information is available is 1985-86. The figures for England are given in the table. Allocations are not made on a per student basis: instead my right hon. Friend takes account of a number of factors which reflect varying needs in different local authorities' areas. These include the need to provide additional school places in areas of population growth and the distribution of institutions providing advanced further education.

Local authorities in Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Local Education Authority	1985-86 Level of education capital receipts (£)	1985-86 Level of capital allocations expressed on a per student basis (£)
Barking	21,780	25
Barnet	6,165,500	39
Bexley	97,075	13
Brent	n.a.	20
Bromley	NIL	14
Croydon	NIL	40
Ealing	620	48
Enfield	3,700,000	18
Haringey	NIL	26
Harrow	30,608	8
Havering	850,615	8
Hillingdon	1,707,180	14
Hounslow	NIL	40
Kingston-upon-Thames	247,074	71
Merton	n.a.	87
Newham	n.a.	47
Redbridge	570,400	39
Richmond-upon-Thames	600,000	18
Sutton	140,000	13
Waltham Forest	27,300	25
Inner London	n.a.	34
Birmingham	NIL	17
Coventry	123,324	43
Dudley	NIL	40
Sandwell	NIL	29
Solihull	NIL	15
Walsall	NIL	23
Wolverhampton	NIL	32
Knowsley	NIL	28
Liverpool	14,175	42
St. Helens	NIL	37
Sefton	11,620	28
Wirral	7,200	10
Bolton	NIL	8
Bury	NIL	25
Manchester	NIL	59
Oldham	17,595	23
Rochdale	NIL	39
Salford	NIL	32
Stockport	NIL	26
Tameside	100,176	11
Trafford	NIL	39
Wigan	16,352	20
Barnsley	23,414	25
Doncaster	NIL	6
Rotherham	NIL	8
Sheffield	2,630	30
Bradford	233,746	72
Calderdale	NIL	22
Kirklees	NIL	40
Leeds	1,907,239	22
Wakefield	90,652	23
Gateshead	NIL	29

Local Education Authority	1985-86 Level of education capital receipts (£)	1985-86 Level of capital allocations expressed on a per student basis (£)
Newcastle upon Tyne	137,300	28
North Tyneside	22,500	59
South Tyneside	NIL	39
Sunderland	183,109	46
Isles of Scilly	NIL	NIL
Avon	1,754,179	21
Bedfordshire	4,607,257	15
Berkshire	5,744,812	48
Buckinghamshire	3,040,890	52
Cambridgeshire	2,353,120	36
Cheshire	287,082	26
Cleveland	39,420	34
Cornwall	256,808	43
Cumbria	272,152	41
Derbyshire	723,455	41
Devon	2,461,483	38
Dorset	1,135,222	54
Durham	109,735	25
East Sussex	1,174,773	43
Essex	1,109,104	43
Gloucestershire	1,085,787	47
Hampshire	5,664,804	43
Hereford and Worcester	944,230	12
Hertfordshire	10,981,665	26
Humberside	280,472	23
Isle of Wight	91,063	55
Kent	3,283,969	20
Lancashire	1,656,758	50
Leicestershire	743,070	38
Lincolnshire	569,423	36
Norfolk	NIL	25
North Yorkshire	1,019,688	28
Northamptonshire	763,728	38
Northumberland	65,364	23
Nottinghamshire	1,670,445	15
Oxfordshire	1,531,417	35
Shropshire	109,265	46
Somerset	327,674	14
Staffordshire	683,344	46
Suffolk	2,131,357	33
Surrey	7,567,751	30
Warwickshire	201,229	18
West Sussex	NIL	31
Wiltshire	623,972	31

Notes: The number of students includes all those attending a maintained school (either full-time or part-time) in January 1986 plus all students (either full-time or part-time) enrolled on a course of further or higher education in November 1985. The allocations are those announced before the start of the financial year and do not include additional allocations made later to some authorities.

n.a.—The authority has not made a return.

Council of Europe and Western Union

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to make available to children of school age information on United Kingdom participation in the Council of Europe and Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. He hopes, however, that where opportunity to do so arises in the school curriculum, pupils' understanding of the United Kingdom's relationships with its European neighbours including the functions and work of the European Community, the Council of Europe and the Western Union will be developed as part of the process of learning about political processes and economic matters.

Advertising

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of his Department's advertising and promotional budget is spent on regional or local newspaper advertising; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Regional/local newspaper advertising accounted for 3 per cent. of the total promotional budget and 6·2 per cent. of advertising spending.

Students (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish a consultative document on the ethnic minority of students applying for higher and further education.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is hoped to circulate a consultative paper which will address the issues and options for the collection of ethnically-based statistics for students in public sector further and higher education. It is the Department's intention also to open discussions with the central clearing houses about monitoring the applications process for public sector higher education.

Schoolchildren (Ethnic Monitoring)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish a consultative document on the ethnic monitoring of schoolchildren.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 20 March at column *632*.

Teachers (Industrial Action)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will conduct a survey of local education authorities to establish which ones deducted pay from teachers who have taken part in industrial action in the current year; and what proportion of pay was generally deducted.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Department has asked local education authorities for this information. In all cases where information has been confirmed, authorities intend to deduct half a day's pay from each teacher who took part in the series of half-day strike rallies.

Primary School Staff (Guidelines)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recommendations and guidelines his Department issues to local education authorities regarding the numbers of staff in primary schools which cater for children who are *(a)* physically handicapped and *(b)* highly intelligent and have special needs under the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: Current guidance on staffing in special schools and classes in England is set out in the Department's circular 4/73. This gives advice to local education authorities on standards for schools for different handicaps, including the physically handicapped. It does not, however, specifically cover children who are highly intelligent and have special needs under the

Education Act 1981. This guidance is at present under review. I shall send the hon. Member a copy of circular 4/73.

Engineering Students

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 9 March, *Official Report*, column 24, what discussions he has had with the higher education planning bodies about more university places for engineering students.

Mr. Walden: Officials of the Department are in regular contact with the relevant funding bodies about higher education places in engineering as on other matters, and will be discussing specifically the possibilities for increasing the availability of manufacturing systems engineering courses.

Class Sizes

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the number of classes of 31 pupils and over in England as a percentage of the total number of classes in *(a)* the maintained primary sector and *(b)* the maintained secondary sector for every year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The number of classes with 31 pupils and over as a percentage of all classes in maintained primary and secondary schools in England each year since 1979 is as follows. The analyses relate to classes taught by one teacher on a selected period within the day of the census count in January of each year and may not, therefore, be representative of the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

January each year	*Primary schools*[1]	*Secondary schools*[1]
1979	27·4	10·3
1980	23·6	8·9
1981	22·6	8·4
1982	21·6	7·9
1983	19·9	7·6
1984	19·1	7·1
1985	19·4	7·0
1986	20·2	6·3

[1] Includes middle schools as deemed.

Accommodation

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information has been received by his Department in recent years regarding capital expenditure bids for projects including the removal of surplus school places, as to whether the proposed new or modified accommodation will meet the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 in force after 1 September 1991; whether any such information concerns the cost of works to meet such requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Local authorities are not required, in submitting their overall plans for capital expenditure on schools to the Department, to say whether proposed new or modified accommodation will meet the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information has been received by his Department in recent years, regarding schemes for school closures or amalgamations, as to whether the proposed new or modified accommodation will meet the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 in force after 1 September 1991; whether any such information concerns the cost of works to meet such requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Under the current arrangements for the approval of individual major school building projects, local education authorities certify that the work planned will conform to the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981. For most projects authorities submit cost details to the Department on a voluntary basis, but there are more detailed arrangements for the submission of costs relating to projects at voluntary aided schools and projects costing £2 million or more at county and controlled schools.

Governors' Reports

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he has issued to local education authorities about responsibility for payment for the circulation of governors' reports under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986; and what information he has about the number of governors who are paying for such reports out of capitation fees.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has not issued any guidance to local education authorities on this matter. Nor does it collect information about the local arrangements for funding governors' annual reports and their distribution.

School Openings and Closures

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed in the years 1974 to 1978 and in the years 1979 to 1987 in (i) Yorkshire and Humberside and (ii) Barnsley metropolitan district area.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. The table shows the number of schools to be established (including establishment by amalgamation) and closed under proposals approved by my right hon. Friend or determined by LEAs, in the period from August 1980, when the Education Act 1980 came into force, and March 1987.

Area	*Number of schools to be established*	*Number of schools to be closed*
Yorkshire and Humberside (excluding Barnsley)	85	154
Barnsley	10	11

Mixed Schools

Dame Peggy Fenner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information has been compiled by his Department about the relative disadvantages experienced by girls in some subjects in mixed schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information compiled by the Department of Education and Science about the relative disadvantages experienced by girls in some subjects in mixed schools is contained in the following publications:

Education Survey 21: Curricular Differences for Boys and Girls (HMSO 1975).

Aspects of Secondary Education in England (HMSO 1979).

A Review of Monitoring in Mathematics (DES 1986).

Statistical Bulletin 13/86: Statistics of School Leavers in England—January 1985 (DES November 1986).

The Government are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities in schools and to the need to encourage girls in those areas of the curriculum such as science and CDT where there is evidence of sex-related differences in achievement. My right hon. Friend believes that his proposals for a national curriculum will do much to ensure that girls follow a broad and balanced curriculum to the age of 16 which includes those subjects in which they have traditionally been under represented.

Birkbeck College

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will have urgent discussions with the University Grants Committee and London University about the funding of Birkbeck college for 1987-88 and the following two years; and what assessment he has made of the implications for future funding requirements of the proposals contained in the Government's White Paper on higher education.

Mr. Walden: The funding of Birkbeck college is a matter for the University Grants Committee and the University of London. The implications for future funding requirements of the Government's proposals in "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge" (Cm. 114) are set out in paragraph 1.8 of that White Paper.

Central Electricity Generating Board (Booklets)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about a booklet entitled "Nuclear Know-How—with an element of truth", being circulated by the south-eastern region of the Central Electricity Board to schools; what information he has from elsewhere in the United Kingdom about the circulation of similar booklets to schools by the Central Electricity Generating Board; whether the Central Electricity Generating Board consulted his Department on the content of the booklet and its circulation to schools; what efforts he is making to ensure schools receive information from those who oppose nuclear energy and favour alternative sources of energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No representations have been received about this booklet. I understand that the Electricity Council circulates annually to all schools a catalogue of materials and resources and that "Nuclear Know-How" is one of the titles listed. The booklet is sent to schools only if they request it. The Central Electricity Generating Board did not consult the Department of Education and Science on the content of the booklet or its circulation; nor was it necessary to do so. It is open to those who oppose nuclear energy to make information of their own available to schools.

Student Statistics

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the percentage of students attending universities and polytechnics in each of the years 1978 to 1986, inclusive, who were educated at independent schools.

Mr. Walden: The percentage of students from England and Wales accepted through the Universities Central Council on Admissions and who had previously attended independent schools is shown in the following table. Information for polytechnics from the Polytechnic Central Admissions System, collected for the first time for 1986, is not yet available.

United Kingdom Universities: accepted candidates domiciled in England & Wales who had previously attended independent[1] schools.

Percentages

Year	*As Percentage of All accepted candidates*	*As Percentage of All accepted candidates with known previous institution[2]*
1978	n/a	24·7
1979	n/a	24·7
1980	n/a	24·3
1981	n/a	25·2
1982	n/a	24·8
1983	n/a	24·3
1984	n/a	25·0
1985	22·3	25·8
1986	21·7	25·7

n/a not available

[1] Including direct grant.

[2] Figures for 1978 to 1982 are estimates based on a 10 per cent. sample.

A-level Statistics

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the percentage of pupils attaining grades A, B and C, respectively, at A-level in each of the years 1978 to 1986, inclusive, who were educated at independent schools.

Mr. Dunn: Information for the academic year 1985-86 is not yet available. In 1984-85, 36 per cent. of English school leavers with a grade A pass at GCE A-level, 28.6 per cent. with a grade B pass and 25.5 per cent. with a grade C left from independent schools. Data in this form are not readily available for earlier years.

Sixth Form Places

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the percentage of sixth form places in each of the years from 1978 to 1986, inclusive, which came from the independent sector.

Mr. Dunn: Information on sixth form places is not collected centrally. The percentages of school pupils (excluding special schools) aged 16 and over who were in independent schools in England in the years 1978 to 1986 were as follows:

January each year	*per cent*
1978	17·9
1979	17·9
1980	18·3

January each year	per cent
1981	17·8
1982	16·5
1983	16·1
1984	16·9
1985	17·5
1986	17·9

O-level Statistics

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the percentage of pupils attaining five or more O-levels in each of the years 1978 to 1986, inclusive, who were educated at independent schools.

Mr. Dunn: The proportions of English school leavers with five or more higher grades at O-level/CSE who left from independent schools are as shown. Information for 1985-86 is not yet available.

Academic year	Percentage
1977-78	18·4
1978-79	18·0
1979-80	18·2
1980-81	18·2
1981-82	17·2
1982-83	16·3
1983-84	16·3
1984-85	17·3

Source: School Leavers Survey. Data subject to sampling error.

Boarding Places

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the percentage of boarding places in each of the years 1978 to 1986, inclusive, which came from *(a)* the independent sector and *(b)* the maintained sector;

(2) if he will publish the number of boarding places in each of the years 1978 to 1986, inclusive, in *(a)* the independent sector and *(b)* the maintained sector.

Mr. Dunn: The numbers of boarding places are not collected, but the numbers of full-time boarders and the percentage of pupils who are boarders in the maintained and non-maintained sectors for each of the years 1978 to 1986 inclusive are given in the following table.

	Boarding Pupils			
	Non-maintained[1] schools		Maintained[2] schools	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
1978	133,829	85·6	22,576	14·4
1979	132,433	85·8	21,916	14·2
1980	132,299	86·2	21,166	13·8
1981	132,289	86·6	20,488	13·4
1982	128,745	86·5	20,145	13·5
1983	126,499	86·4	19,831	13·6
1984	124,219	87·0	18,528	13·0
1985	122,309	87·4	17,560	12·6
1986	121,757	87·9	16,700	12·1

[1] Includes direct grant schools and non-maintained special schools. Excludes a small number of boarders in independent nursery establishments recognised as efficient. Also excludes non responding schools.
[2] Includes special schools and centres for English as a second language.

Boarding Education

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any proposals to increase the availability of boarding education; and if he will state the Government's policy on independent schools having charitable status.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have no proposals at present to increase the availability of boarding education. Nor have they any plans to alter the arrangements whereby certain independent schools enjoy the benefits of charitable status.

Voluntary Aided Schools

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of bids for minor work allocation in voluntary aided schools have been successful.

Mr. Dunn: The allocations made to local education authorities in 1987-88 for capital expenditure in their areas by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools included in most cases an element for minor works costing less than £120,000. It is for individual authorities, in consultation with the voluntary bodies, to decide how to use this element.

Plans for minor works totalling £22·9 million were submitted by authorities. The total allocations for such works were £4·215 million which represents 18 per cent. of those plans.

Professor Colin Blakemore

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if Professor Colin Blakemore has received any support from the Medical Research Council since 1976.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1987, c. *56*]: I understand from the Medical Research Council that Professor Colin Blakemore has received 16 grants from the council since 1976.

ENERGY

Uranium

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the quantity of stocks of depleted uranium held by BNFL at *(a)* Sellafield, *(b)* Capenhurst and *(c)* Springfields.

Mr. Goodlad: The quantity of depleted uranium resulting from the reprocessing of civil magnox fuel and the operations of enrichment plants for civil purposes and stored by BNFL is as follows:

	Uranium tonnes
Sellafield	300
Capenhurst	16,000
Springfields	5,000

A further 5,200 tonnes are held at Chapelcross. All this depleted uranium is subject to international safeguards.

Advertising

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of his Department's advertising and promotional budget is spent on regional and local newspaper advertising.

Mr. Peter Walker: During 1986-87 the Department of Energy spent £149,400 on regional and local press advertising, £137,000 on local radio and £310,000 on specialist trade and technical magazines.

In total these figures represent 10 per cent. of the Department's spend through the COI.

Oil and Gas Developments

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many field development approvals there have been for *(a)* oil and *(b)* gas in each month since January 1986.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The following projects have been approved between January 1986 and March 1987:

	Date
Oil	*1986*
Ivanhoe	January
Rob Roy	January
Petronella	April
Thistle (Area 6)[1]	July
Innes (revised development plan)[1]	December
Stainton (onshore)	December
Gas	
South Valiant	February
Vanguard	February
Vulcan	February
North Hewett[1]	March
Cleeton	May
South Ravenspurn	May
South Morecambe (Stage 2)[1]	October
Pipelines	
Auk-Fulmar[1]	April
Gas	*1987*
Audrey	February

[1] Incremental project, that is further development within petroleum revenue tax areas of existing fields.

Colliery Closures

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the number of colliery and related workshop closures, and the number of jobs lost, for each year from 1974 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the Yorkshire and Humberside area and *(c)* in Barnsley metropolitan district council area.

Mr. David Hunt: I have asked the chairman of the British Coal Corporation to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to inplement recommendation 13 of the Sizewell B report regarding the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and the handling of plutonium.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 8.30 of my right hon. Friend's letter of 12 March 1987 to the chairman of the CEGB giving consent to the construction of Sizewell B, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. Discussions are taking place on the publication of records relating to future plutonium production from United Kingdom civil reactors.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of North Wales as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Wylfa *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg. sector from the power station out to (i) five miles and (ii) 10 miles; *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population within (i) five miles, and (ii) 10 miles of the power station; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculations of such estimates to be placed in the Library;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of North Wales as to, in the event of a nuclear accident at Trawsfynydd *(a)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of high risk groups from the towns of Bangor, Conwy, Llandudno, Caernarfon, Festiniog, and Holyhead, *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of low-mobility groups from the above mentioned towns, *(c)* what time estimates have been prepared for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the above mentioned towns; and if he will arrange for data and calculations on which such estimates have been made to be placed in the Library;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of North Wales as to, in the event of a nuclear accident at Trawsfynydd *(a)* what evacuation time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg. sector from the power station out to (i) five miles, (ii) 10 miles, of the power station; *(b)* what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of the population within (i) five miles and (ii) 10 miles, of the power station; and if he will arrange for the basis and calculations of such estimates to be placed in the Library;

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cleveland about the time estimates for the evacuation of low-mobility groups from Stockton, Redcar and Hartlepool, in his contingency plans for a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cleveland about the time estimates for the evacuation of high-risk groups from Stockton, Redcar and Hartlepool, in his contingency plans for a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cleveland about the time estimates for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Stockton, Redcar and Hartlepool, in his contingency plans for a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool;

(4) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Tyne and Wear as to whether, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool, any time estimates have been made for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the populations of Sunderland, Newcastle and Tynemouth;

(5) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Tyne and Wear as to whether, in the event of a civil

nuclear disaster at Hartlepool, any time estimates have been made for the evacuation of low-mobility groups from Sunderland, Newcastle and Tynemouth;

(6) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Tyne and Wear as to whether, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool, any time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high-risk groups from Sunderland, Newcastle and Tynemouth;

(7) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Durham as to whether, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool, any time estimates have been made for the evacuation of high-risk groups from Darlington and Durham;

(8) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Durham as to whether, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool, any time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of low-mobility groups from Darlington and Durham;

(9) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Durham as to whether, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Hartlepool, any time estimates have been prepared for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the populations of Darlington and Durham.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Berkeley, Oldbury or Hinkley Point, what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of the population of Newport; and if he will call for the basis and calculation of such time estimates to be placed in the Library;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to, in the event of a civil nuclear disaster at Berkeley, Oldbury or Hinkley Point (i) what time estimates have been prepared for the evacuation of high-risk groups from Newport, (ii) what time estimates have been made for the evacuation of low-mobility groups from Newport and (iii) what time estimates have been made for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Newport; and if he will call for the basis and calculation of such time estimates to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Lancashire concerning emergency preparedness for a civil nuclear disaster at Heysham with particular reference to (i) time estimates for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to *(a)* five miles and *(b)* 10 miles, (ii) time estimates for the evacuation of the population within *(a)* five miles and *(b)* 10 miles of the power station, (iii) time estimates for the evacuation of the population of *(a)* Lancaster, *(b)* Blackpool, *(c)* South Ribble, *(d)* Burnley, *(e)* Chorley and *(f)* Southport, (iv) time estimates for the evacuation of high-risk groups at those centres of population, (v) time estimates for the evacuation of low-mobility groups at those centres of population and (vi) time estimates for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the populations of those centres of population; and if he will arrange for the basis, and calculations underlying these estimates to be placed in the Library;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester concerning the emergency preparedness for a civil nuclear disaster at Heysham, with particular reference to *(a)* time estimates for the evacuation of high-risk groups from Manchester, *(b)* time estimates for the evacuation of low-mobility groups from Manchester and *(c)* time estimates for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets to the population of Manchester; and if he will arrange for the data and calculations on which any such estimates are based to be placed in the Library;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside concerning the emergency preparedness for a civil nuclear disaster at Heysham, with particular reference to time estimates for the evacuation of the population of *(a)* St. Helens and *(b)* Liverpool; and if he will place in the Library the basis and calculation underlying those time estimates;

(4) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cumbria concerning the emergency preparedness for a nuclear accident at Calder Hall with particular reference to (i) time estimates for the evacuation of the most populated 22½ deg sector from the power station out to *(a)* five miles and *(b)* 10 miles, (ii) time estimates for the evacuation of the population within *(a)* five miles and *(b)* 10 miles of the power station, (iii) time estimates for the evacuation of the population of *(a)* Whitehaven, *(b)* Workington and *(c)* Barrow in Furness, (iv) time estimates for the evacuation of high-risk groups from those centres of population, *(v)* time estimates for the evacuation of low-mobility groups from those centres of population and (vi) time estimates for the distribution of potassium iodate tablets from those centres of population; and if he will arrange for the basis, and calculation underlying those time estimates to be placed in the Library;

(5) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester concerning the emergency preparedness for a civil nuclear disaster at Heysham with particular reference to time estimates for the evacuation of the population of *(a)* Wigan, *(b)* Bolton, *(c)* Bury, *(d)* Rochdale, *(e)* Leigh and *(f)* Manchester; and if he will place in the Library the basis and calculations underlying those time estimates.

Mr. Goodlad: The precautions taken in the design and construction of nuclear installations in this country, and the very high safety standards applied in operating and maintaining them, make it highly unlikely that accidents will occur which might significantly affect the public. But however remote the risks, all operators of nuclear installations are required by HM Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive, as a condition of its site licences, to prepare emergency plans, including those for dealing with an accidental release of radioactivity. The same requirement also applies to the sites of the Atomic Energy Authority.

These plans, on which police and other involved bodies must be consulted, are tested regularly in exercises monitored by HMNII. They cover both emergency procedures at the site and offsite arrangements to protect the public, including monitoring up to 40 km. and evacuation up to 1 km. for later magnox and AGR stations and 1·5 miles for earlier magnox stations. These plans are capable of extension in the improbable event of this proving necessary, but the HSE does not consider that detailed plans covering a wider area are justified. It believes that a balance needs to be struck between detailed plans that are sufficiently extensive to cope with a serious accident and the unjustified use of resources involved in planning for improbable accidents. This approach was

specifically endorsed by Sir Frank Layfield in his report on Sizewell. It follows that the specific calculations and assessments sought have not been made.

In an announcement on 18 December following the first stage of a thorough review of existing plans and procedures in the light of experience of the Chernobyl accident, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister concluded that existing plans continue to provide a valid basis for the response to any accident in the United Kingdom. In announcing his consent to the planning application for Sizewell B, the Secretary of State accepted the Layfield report's recommendations relating to emergency planning. These will be taken fully into account in the continuing work on the Government review.

The duties and responsibilities of police forces are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Queen's Counsel

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General (1) how many Queen's Counsel he has removed from his approved list of prosecution barristers during his tenure of office; and for what reason in each case;

(2) what procedures he adopts when removing Queen's Counsel from his approved list of prosecution barristers; whether he informs them in advance of his intention to do so; and whether he gives them an opportunity to make representations on their own behalf if they so wish;

(3) what remedy is available to Queen's Counsel aggrieved by their removal from his approved list of prosecution barristers by way of appeal against his decision.

The Solicitor-General: The Attorney-General has been responsible for nominating prosecuting counsel for cases conducted by Government Departments with prosecution functions or by the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions with the greater proportion always emanating from the latter. For this purpose, it has long been the practice to maintain lists of approved counsel or, in some cases, panels of standing counsel.

In so far as they related to the DPP, these arrangements were revised in 1986, after full consultation with the Bar, to take account of the establishment of the Crown Prosecution Service. The Crown Prosecution Service is now responsible for the maintenance of lists of counsel for each circuit which are submitted to the Attorney-General for approval. Nothing short of total loss of confidence by the CPS centrally or a complete breakdown of the instructing solicitor-counsel relationship is regarded as sufficient to justify removal from the CPS lists. The arrangements made with the Bar is that, where any such situation is considered to have arisen, counsel is to be informed that consideration is being given to the removal of his name from the lists, together with the reason, and he is to be invited, if he wishes, to make written representations to the CPS committees responsible for the circuit lists in question.

In the event of counsel's name being removed, he may seek a review of the decision by the head of field management and, if still dissatisfied and provided he has the support of the leader of the circuit, a further review by the Director of Public Prosecutions personally.

The arrangements apply to both leading and junior counsel.

So far as prosecuting counsel instructed by other Government Departments are concerned, my right hon. and learned Friend applies similar criteria to the composition of the relevant lists and to the appointment of standing counsel.

There have been only two occasions during the tenure of office of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General when he has removed the name of leading counsel from a prosecution list. In each case the reason was loss of confidence in the light of counsel's performance.

Notary Public (Appointment)

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General if he will arrange for the faculty giving effect to the appointment of a notary public in Wales and associated documentation to be made in the Welsh language or in a bilingual format.

The Attorney-General: The faculty appointing a Welsh district notary and the commission for taking the oath and declaration can be provided in a bilingual format upon request at the time of preparation of such documents.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

BT (Network Restrictions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if there are any current restrictions on the provision by foreign companies of equipment for British Telecom and the British telecommunications network in the area of activity for which Cable and Wireless plc is seeking to provide for the Japanese network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Government have had a consistent policy of liberalising the field of telecommunications to allow for competition in the supply of equipment and services. Any equipment, regardless of origin, may be connected to the public switched telephone network, provided it meets the stringent technical standards needed for approval.

The Government have also licensed Mercury Communications Ltd. as a competitor to BT for both domestic and international services. An exact parallel cannot be drawn to the C and W issue in Japan, where no competition in international services exists. It is this competition which C and W, with its IDC partners, is seeking to provide.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the deficits in manufacturing trade with Japan, Germany and the European Economic Community, respectively, in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: Manufacturing trade, defined in SITC terms and divisions 5-8, with Japan, Germany and the EC, in the 12 months ended February 1987, showed a crude balance of trade deficit, in £ billions of 3·9, 6·7 and 10·6 respectively.

Japan

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about trade relations with Japan.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Companies (Accounts)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current average length of time between the receipt of annual accounts by the companies registration office and their publication.

Mr. Howard: The Registrar of Companies estimates that the average time between the receipt of batches of annual accounts and returns in February and March this year and their publication was around three and a half weeks.

Companies Registration Office

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many staff are currently employed at the companies registration office; and, of these, how many are occupied in *(a)* microfilming operations, *(b)* document examination and *(c)* enforcement of default.

Mr. Howard: A total of 1,135 staff are currently employed at the companies registration offices, of whom 301½ are predominantly occupied in microfilming operations, 337 in document examination and 124 in the enforcement of default.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated cost of running the companies registration office during 1987-88, and what is the estimated revenue for services provided during the same period.

Mr. Howard: The figures are:

	£ million
Estimated cost[1]	20·1
Estimated revenue	28·9

[1] On a memorandum trading account basis.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that the guidelines on tradeable information issued in August 1986 are being complied with by the companies registration office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Yes, I am satisfied that the guidelines are being complied with. The companies registration office is providing basic information more efficiently and making it more accessible to the public. Wider use and awareness of company information should benefit the private sector in its role of adding value and manipulating the data in electronic form, to produce an enhanced product for which users will pay more. This is the activity which the Government's guidelines on tradeable information seek to encourage.

Newspapers (Takeovers and Purchases)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he takes to monitor assurances given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in respect of newspaper takeovers and purchases.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to his earlier questions on 10 April, at column 429. Assurances given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission have no statutory under-pinning and are not monitored. In the two instances where conditional consent was granted to a newspaper transfer, the conditions of the consent required certain changes in the articles of association of the companies concerned and that these should be agreed by the Secretary of State before the transfer could take place. These changes primarily provided for questions directed at editorial independence to be considered by independent directors appointed for the purpose; in any disputes concerning editorial independence the decisions of the independent directors are final and binding.

Other conditions require the Secretary of State's prior consent if certain further changes are proposed to the articles of association of the companies.

Breach of conditions attached to a transfer would constitute an offence under section 62(2) of the Fair Trading Act 1973. My Department would consider carefully any allegations concerning breaches of such conditions.

Export Licences

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what export licences his Department refused for exports in 1985; and if he will state the countries concerned.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to make public information of this kind.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to transfer powers under the Financial Services Act 1986 to the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Howard: I have considered carefully the rules and other material sent to me by the Securities and Investments Board Ltd. in the light of the reports I have received from the Director General of Fair Trading and also of the other representations which have been made to me. I am satisfied that the various conditions laid down under the Financial Services Act for a transfer of powers to the board are fulfilled. I have accordingly today laid before the House a draft order under section 114 of the Act transferring certain powers to the Board. The powers in question include most of the transferable powers under part I of the Act (with the exception of chapter VIII, which relates to collective investment schemes) and certain powers of prosecution. Copies of the supporting material have been placed in the Vote Office and the Library of the House.

British Shipbuilders (Chairman)

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about his plans for the chairmanship of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Channon: It is with considerable regret that I have accepted that Mr. Phillip Hares CBE should retire as chairman and chief executive of British Shipbuilders on grounds of ill-health. Although Mr. Hares has been in post for only 12 months, he has successfully managed an important adjustment in the scale of the corporation's activities, and has secured major orders that under-pin the

future of its two main yards, I should like to express the Government's gratitude to Mr. Hares for his valuable services to the corporation both as chairman and chief executive and in other posts over the past 10 years.

I am glad to announce that Mr. John Lister has accepted my invitation to succeed Mr. Hares. Mr. Lister has pursued a successful career with Imperial Chemical Industries plc, most recently as chairman of ICI fibres division. Mr. Lister will become chairman and chief executive of the corporation on 1 May.

I should also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Maurice Phelps, the BS board member for personnel and employee relations, who agreed to delay his departure from the corporation for a post in private industry in order to assume the position of acting chief executive during Mr. Hares' indisposition. Mr. Phelps, who leaves his executive position on the British Shipbuilders board from 4 May, is to continue as a non-executive director of the corporation.

Privatisation (Multiple Share Applications)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of multiple share applications discovered in the following privatisations: Amersham International, British Gas, Cable and Wireless and Associated British Ports, and the number of prosecutions arising from multiple share applications, together with the penalties involved; and if he will supply the same information in respect of the Trustee Savings Bank flotation.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply* 9 April 1987, c. *338*]: Information about the number of multiple share applications is not available. Prosecution is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will establish inquiries into the sale of shares in *(a)* British Aerospace (second tranche), *(b)* British Airways, *(c)* British Gas, *(d)* Britoil (second tranche), *(e)* Cable and Wireless (third tranche) and *(f)* the Trustee Savings Bank, with a view to establishing the precise extent of multiple share applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987, c. *339*]: No.

EMPLOYMENT

Injuries (Statistics)

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General how many major injuries have occurred in manufacturing industry and construction in each year since 1980; and to what factors he attributes the trend shown by these figures.

Mr. Lee: The table gives the data requested.

Reported Occupational Major Injuries in Manufacturing and Construction, Great Britain (as defined in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Manufacturing:					
Employees	4,109	4,066	4,238	4,649	4,824
Self employed	8	21	18	31	17
Non-employed	22	40	60	57	46
Construction:					
Employees	1,690	1,950	2,176	2,288	2,244
Self employed	40	51	57	70	113
Non-employed	36	33	66	75	78

Comparable data for 1980 and 1986 are not available. Performance varies between sectors of manufacturing industry and construction. The factors are complex but the increasing numbers of reported accidents in certain sectors suggest failure by managers to recognise that health and safety is an integral part of successful business management.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General when the list of installations notified to the Health and Safety Executive under the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982 will be published.

Mr. Trippier: A list of names and locations of local installations notified under the 1982 regulations is available, on request, for public inspection at each of the area offices of the Health and Safety Executive. There are no plans to publish a single list of all installations notified.

"Engineering Our Future"

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General what steps are being taken by the Government to implement recommendation 64 of the Finniston report entitled "Engineering Our Future".

Mr. Trippier: In preparing regulations under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, it is for the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) in each case to consider whether it would be appropriate to adopt the first part of this recommendation, or to legislate for safe engineering practice in some other way. When consulting on proposals for regulations which might include such requirements, it is the HSC's practice to include the Engineering Council among those consulted.

Health and Safety

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General what categories of people are treated by his Department as competent persons for the purpose of sections 22, 26, 27, 35 and 36 of the Factories Act 1961.

Mr. Trippier: There are no set categories of competent persons. Whether a person is competent for the purpose depends on the circumstances and is a matter for the courts to decide. However, it is generally considered that such a person should have such practical and theoretical knowledge and the actual experience of the type of machinery or plant which he has to examine as will enable him to detect defects or weaknesses which it is the purpose of the examination to discover, and to assess their importance in relation to the strength and functions of the machinery or plant.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General in what circumstances two legally qualified persons are allowed to sit on an industrial tribunal.

Mr. Lee: An industrial tribunal consists of a legally-qualified chairman and two lay members. The lay

members are chosen for their industrial relations experience but it is possible that either or both of them may also have a legal qualification.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many married women in the Knowsley local authority district are currently being paid unemployment benefit; and what were the comparable figures 12, 24 and 36 months previously.

Mr. Lee: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Employment and Training Measures

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General what are the total number of people subject to special employment and training measures at the latest available date for the Knowsley local authority district; what are the measures and numbers affected in each case; and what were the comparable figures 12 months and 24 months previously.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give precise total figures for the Knowsley local authority district because of the various bases on which local information has been collected. The total number of people participating in the following employment, training and enterprise measures were:

Dates (End of March)

Programme	*1987*	*1986*	*1985*	*Area*
Community Programme	1,613	1,513	1,160	Knowsley Local Authority District
Voluntary Projects Programme	42	50	87	Knowsley Local Authority District
Community Industry	269	277	282	Knowsley Local Authority District
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	943	1,057	744	Merseyside Outer District
Job Splitting Scheme	12	n.a.	n.a.	Inner Liverpool Area
Job Release Scheme	225	425	736	Liverpool Travel-to-work Area
New Workers Scheme	461	n.a.	n.a.	Outer Liverpool Area
YTS—In Training	4,600	4,371	n.a.	Knowsley Local Authority District

Figures for adult training are not available in the form requested. However there were 4,055 entrants in the Knowsley local authority district in 1986-87 and 4,081 in 1985-86.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish *(a)* a table showing estimates of the number of part-time employees in the west midlands region and county including number of part-time women workers and part-time male workers, at April 1986 and *(b)* a table showing estimates of the number and proportion of male part-time workers and female part-time workers, in the west midlands region and county earning less the £3.20 and £3.40 per hour at April 1986.

Mr. Lee: *(a)* The available information, from the Census of Employment, relates to September 1984 and is as follows:

Estimated numbers in employment—west midlands region.

	Number
Part-time males	65,800
Part-time females	349,300
Total	415,100

The 1984 census results for the west midlands metropolitan county are not yet available. More recent estimates of part-time females in employment in the west midlands region are published in table 1·5 of *Employment Gazette*, copies of which are available in the Library.

(b) Estimates of the proportion of part-time adult female employees with gross hourly earnings below specified amounts for the west midlands region and West midlands metropolitan county are available from the New Earnings Survey and are shown in the table.

Percentage of Part-time Adult Female Employees with gross hourly earnings below: percentage
April 1986

Region	*Metropolitan County*
Gross hourly earnings 320p	
83·1	82·1
Gross hourly earnings 340p	
85·3	85·2

Comparable information for male part-time employees is not available.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing, in April 1986, the proportion of full-time employees in the west midlands region and county, earning less than *(a)* £80, *(b)* £120, *(c)* £125 and *(d)* £130 per week exclusive of overtime payments, for male workers, male manual workers, male non-manual workers, and female workers, female manual workers, and female non-manual workers.

Mr. Lee: The available information relates to full-time adult employees working a full week and is set out in the table for the west midlands region and West Midlands metropolitan county.

Percentage with gross weekly earnings excluding overtime less than:

	£80		£120		£130	
	Region	Metropolitan county	Region	Metropolitan county	Region	Metropolitan county
Males						
Manual	2·3	2·6	28·0	23·6	37·8	33·1
Non-manual	1·5	1·6	10·5	10·2	14·5	14·9
All	1·9	2·2	20·6	17·7	27·9	25·1
Females						
Manual	21·7	24·0	79·0	78·9	87·0	87·1
Non-manual	9·2	8·6	49·5	47·4	59·0	57·1
All	12·6	12·7	57·7	55·7	66·8	65·0

Source: New Earnings Survey, April 1986.

Merseyside

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the companies on *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside where workers have been sacked and the numbers involved in official disputes since May 1983 to the latest date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Official information on industrial disputes in individual companies is confidential. No statistics are held on dismissals by my Department.

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General how many workers have been dismissed by companies on *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside for claiming trades union recognition.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the current involvement of the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service in disputes on *(a)* Merseyside and *(b)* Liverpool at the latest date and the names of the companies involved.

Mr. Lee: I understand that ACAS is involved in 12 disputes on Merseyside, five of which are in Liverpool. Discussions between ACAS and the parties in a dispute are confidential and it would therefore not be appropriate for me to name the companies involved.

Factory Closures

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the number and type of factory and workshop closures and the number of work people involved losing their jobs, during each year from 1974 by industrial category *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(c)* in Barnsley metropolitan council area.

Mr. Lee: National information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The available information is as follows:

Workplace closures

Industry division	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Yorkshire and Humberside			
1. Energy and water	4	28	16
2. Extraction of minerals	12	16	7
3. Metal goods, etc.	40	25	36
4. Other manufacturers	44	36	54
5. Construction	11	17	13
7. Transport and communications	13	5	12
Total	124	127	138
Barnsley Metropolitan District [1]			
1. Energy and water	—	—	—
2. Extraction of minerals	—	—	—
3. Metal goods, etc.	—	—	—
4. Other manufacturers	—	5	—
5. Construction	—	—	—
7. Transport and communications	—	—	—
Total	3	11	6

[1] A detailed breakdown by industry is not given because it might reveal information provided in confidence by individual employers.

Redundancies associated with closures

Industry division	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Yorkshire and Humberside			
1. Energy and water	53	1,294	689
2. Extraction of minerals	1,252	659	343
3. Metal goods, etc.	3,884	768	2,042
4. Other manufacturers	2,166	1,763	1,894
5. Construction	314	998	428
7. Transport and communications	375	118	380
Total	8,044	5,600	5,776
Barnsley Metropolitan District [1]			
1. Energy and water	—	—	—
2. Extraction of minerals	—	—	—
3. Metal goods, etc.	—	—	—
4. Other manufacturers	—	250	—
5. Construction	—	—	—
7. Transport and communications	—	—	—
Total	40	876	223

[1] A detailed breakdown by industry is not given because it might reveal information provided in confidence by individual employers.

South Africa

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General if he has made any representations to London Broadcasting Company about carrying advertising for South African Airways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Trade associations representing the travel and advertising industries were asked to draw to their members' attention the Government's policy on promoting tourism to South Africa last October and they subsequently did so.

Representations have not been made to individual firms. I would point out that the Government's appeal for a voluntary ban has always applied explicitly to the promotion of South Africa as a destination for leisure travel and does not apply to the promotion of travel facilities generally, such as airline flights or hotel accommodation for those with business or family connections in South Africa.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General what information he has about companies breaching Her Majesty's Government's voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that not all sections of the media have so far heeded the Government's appeal not to promote South Africa as a tourist destination. But since the measure is voluntary the final decision must rest with organisations concerned.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General if he will consider making mandatory the voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have no plans to do so. The Government's policy on promoting tourism to South Africa was set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) on 30 October 1986 at column *213*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Arab-Israeli Dispute

3. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold discussions with his European Economic Community counterparts on the prospects for an international conference to resolve Arab-Israeli disputes.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend does so regularly, most recently at the informal meeting of Foreign Ministers at Corsendonk on 4 and 5 April.

Gulf War

8. **Mr. Robert C. Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there has been any progress in gathering support for the United Nations Secretary General's initiative to bring the Gulf war to an end.

Mr. Renton: We continue to play a very active role in discussions within the United Nations aimed at making progress towards a negotiated settlement of the Iran/Iraq conflict, building on the ideas put forward by the Secretary-General. Regrettably there are few signs that serious negotiations are likely to start in the near future. We will continue to give every support to the Secretary-General.

South Korea

13. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on prospects for the United Kingdom's relations with the Republic of South Korea.

23. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with the Republic of South Korea.

Mr. Renton: The prospects for relations with the Republic of Korea are good, especially in the light of the high level visits to and from Korea last year. The economy is growing very rapidly. As I saw for myself when I was in Seoul last month, there are interesting commercial opportunities, although there are some problems, notably over protection for intellectual property.

29. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of South Korea about respect for human rights.

Mr. Renton: The Government of the Republic of Korea are well aware of the importance we attach to respect for human rights. I referred to our continuing interest in the subject during my recent talks in Seoul.

EC (Agricultural Expenditure)

16. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent action the Government have taken to give priority to the control of agricultural spending in the negotiations on finance in the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made clear to the Commission and to other member states that control of expenditure, including agricultural spending, is central to progress on the negotiations on the future of the Community's finances. During our own presidency major reforms were agreed governing spending in the dairy and beef sectors, saving Community taxpayers £6 billion over six years. Comparable reforms are now needed in other sectors.

Philippines

19. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to make any representations to his European colleagues with a view to increasing European assistance and support for the Philippines.

Mr. Renton: The Twelve have consistently made clear their strong political support for President Aquino and the restoration of democracy in the Philippines. We and other partners have substantially increased bilateral aid to the Philippines since Mrs. Aquino came to power. Aid from the European Community has also increased significantly.

Ethiopia

22. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Government of Ethiopia; and what subjects were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met the then Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Goshu Wolde, in London on 20 March 1985. They discussed the famine relief operation, bilateral issues, the royal prisoners, the resettlement programme and the conflict in northern Ethiopia.

European Parliament (President)

24. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the President of the European Parliament.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend discussed a wide range of European Community matters with the President of the European Parliament last month.

USSR (Human Rights)

18. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether during his recent visit to Moscow, he had an opportunity to raise with the Soviet Foreign Minister the plight of the long-term refuseniks; and whether he received any assurances on the subject of the reunification of divided families.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend both raised the question of refuseniks and urged that all who wished to leave the Soviet Union should be allowed to do so. Mr. Gorbachev said that the Soviet Union was considering the question of exit visas and reunification of families with the utmost care, and with positive results where possible.

25. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning human rights abuses in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Renton: A very large number. These were fully taken into account in conversations my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend had in Moscow on this issue.

USA

27. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Washington on the 9 and 10 April where he had extensive discussions with Mr. Shultz. Relations between the United Kingdom and the United States of America continue to be warm, close and constructive.

Middle East

28. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for the peace process in the middle east of the situation in southern Lebanon.

Mr. Renton: Developments in southern Lebanon have some effect on the climate for middle east peace negotiations. We call on the Israelis to complete their withdrawal from southern Lebanon and on all concerned to facilitate UNIFIL's deployment, in accordance with its mandate, to the international border.

30. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any progress has been made towards setting up a middle east peace conference.

34. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments aimed at a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Renton: We are continuing our efforts to help the parties to the Arab/Israel conflict reach sufficient common ground to allow the convening of an international conference aimed at achieving a comprehensive peace settlement in the middle east.

33. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what follow-up discussions he plans concerning the middle east in the light of the visit by King Fahd in March; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards re-establishing diplomatic ties with Syria in the absence of any statement by that country renouncing its rôle in international terrorism.

Mr. Renton: We are in regular discussion with the Saudi Government on a wide range of regional and international issues. The state visit of King Fahd was a most useful opportunity to pursue our dialogue at the highest level. On Syria we have made it clear that there is no prospect of the re-establishment of our diplomatic links until we have evidence, over time, of a change in Syrian support for terrorism.

Mr. Ernie Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Saudi Arabia has made any specific proposals or requests for improving regional security in the Gulf following the intensified level of hostilities between Iran and Iraq and the increased threat to international shipping.

Mr. Renton: Saudi Arabia has made no specific proposals of which we are aware. However, Saudi Arabia, like other member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council, has regularly expressed concern about the threat to shipping in the Gulf; we are in agreement about the need to preserve freedom of navigation in the area and remain in close contact on this subject.

Chemical Weapons

36. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made in the negotiations of a treaty to control the possession, manufacture and deployment of chemical weapons.

Mr. Renton: Negotiations for a comprehensive convention banning chemical weapons resumed at the conference on disarmament on 3 February under Swedish chairmanship. So far attention has concentrated on the problems associated with stockpiles and production facilities, the verification of non-production in the civil chemical industry and the organisation that will be necessary to enforce the convention. There has been some useful elaboration of last year's work but much detail remains to be settled.

Disarmament

26. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of nuclear arms control discussions.

Mr. Renton: The seventh round of the Geneva nuclear and space talks, which began on 15 January, ended on

26 March. We fully support the proposals in the United States INF draft treaty tabled on 4 March, and look forward to further progress in the next round of talks, which is scheduled to begin on 23 April.

Saudi Arabia

35. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs what effect problems associated with the finalisation of payment terms for previously agreed defence contracts between Britain and Saudi Arabia have had on relations between the two countries.

Mr. Renton: There are no [illegible] problems. I am glad to say that United Kingdom-Saudi relations remain excellent.

Mrs. Gloria Proops

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the progress to resolve the payment of outstanding debts from the Zambian high commission to Mrs. Gloria Proops; and what further action he proposes to take.

Mrs. Chalker: Mrs. Gloria Proops is owed approximately £235 by a former employee of the Zambian high commission, now in Zambia. The employee has offered to pay Mrs. Proops but says he is unable to obtain the foreign currency necessary to do so. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been in contact with the Zambian high commission, which has sought approval from the Zambian authorities to pay the money owed to Mrs. Proops. The Zambians would then recover the equivalent amount in local currency from their former employee. Approval has not yet been given but the high commission is pursuing the matter, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will continue to press the Zambian authorities for a successful outcome to Mrs. Proops' case.

Iran-Iraq War (Chemical Weapons)

Mr Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the continued use by Iraq of chemical weapons has been placed on the agenda for the forthcoming meeting of European Economic Community Foreign Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. However, we take every suitable opportunity, both bilaterally and in concert with our EC partners, to express our concern to the Iraqis over their continued use of these abhorrent weapons, and to press for an early peaceful settlement to this tragic conflict.

Cultural Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional funds are to be made available to meet new activities undertaken as a result of the cultural memorandum of understanding signed by him in Moscow.

Mr Eggar: The memorandum on information, culture and education is a facilitating document which will assist independent British organisations and bodies in the information, cultural and education fields to make satisfactory arrangements with their counterparts in the Soviet Union.

Hall and Watts

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list any contracts his Department has made since 1979 with Hall and Watts.

Mr. Renton: The FCO entered into a contract with Hall and Watts in 1986, after they had won a tender for the provision of military training equipment for use by the British Army's training team at Nyanga, Zimbabwe, who are presently undertaking a programme of training for the Mozambican armed forces under the United Kingdom military training assistance scheme.

Entry Clearance Officers

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance officers are currently in post in *(a)* Accra, *(b)* Lagos, *(c)* Kaduna, *(d)* New Delhi, *(e)* Bombay, *(f)* Madras, *(g)* Islamabad, *(h)* Karachi, *(i)* Dhaka and *(j)* Colombo; what is the full complement of entry clearance officers for each of these posts; how many of these were added in order to deal with the extra work that the compulsory visa requirement entails; and what is the *(a)* total cost of the entry clearance staff and *(b)* cost arising as a result of extra staff as a result of the visa requirement at these posts, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: A number of temporary entry clearance officers are being replaced this month and additional staff are being deployed to cope with the seasonal increase in applications. The table indicates the number of entry clearance officers expected to be in post as at 1 May 1987, the full complement of entry clearance officers, and the additional entry clearance officers deployed since the visa regimes were announced:

	ECOs in post as at 1 May 1987	*Full ECO complement*	*Extra ECOs added since 1986*
Accra	2	3	2
Lagos	14	18	15
Kaduna	3	3	2
New Delhi	[2]15	[3]13	8
Bombay	11	11	6
Madras	2	2	2
Islamabad	[4]20	25	8
Karachi	7	7	6
Dhaka	19	21	5
Colombo	4	4	[2]0

[1] Plus two temporary staff during summer.
[2] Plus two leaving 8 May 1987.
[3] Two ECOs were added to the complement in May 1985.
[4] Plus five arriving by mid-May.

The total gross running cost of the entry clearance operation in these posts for the current financial year is expected to be £19,652,400, of which £13,775,100 is for costs incurred from providing extra staff (including ECOs).

Visa Office (Lagos)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when it is expected that the visa office in Lagos will reopen.

Mr. Eggar: The visa office in Lagos reopened on 20 March.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions he has given to British consulates abroad concerning the issue of application forms for those who wish to register as overseas voters.

Mr. Eggar: British consulates have been instructed to make the application forms for electoral registration overseas as widely available as possible. Arrangements for publicity were set out in my written reply of 22 July 1986, at column *142*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). Further instructions on publicity were issued to posts on 6 April 1987.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions he has given to British Council representatives abroad concerning publicity on the issue of application forms for those who wish to register as overseas voters.

Mr. Eggar: No specific instructions have been given to British Council representatives. But they will be aware of local arrangements for the issue of application forms and attendant publicity.

SCOTLAND

Blood Donors

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to the answer of Monday 6 April, *Official Report*, column *107*, if he will indicate when this policy on restricting blood donors was implemented; and if he will estimate the anticipated reduction in the number of blood donors.

Mr. John MacKay: The policy of restricting potential blood donors in order to reduce the risk of transmitting certain tropical diseases has been in operation for many years. The period during which such donors are asked not to donate blood was extended from six months to 12 months in January 1987.

Precautionary measures against the transmission of AIDS by potential donors who have visited certain parts of Africa were introduced in August 1984. Since then, the number of donors bled has continued to rise and no reduction is expected.

Leukaemia

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he expects to publish the COMARE report on childhood leukaemia clusters;

(2) whether he will commission case control studies in respect of child leukaemia clusters.

Mr. John MacKay: COMARE is at present considering the information available on the incidence of leukaemia in under 25-year-olds in Scotland. It is not expected that they will be able to offer advice before the end of this year. Any further studies, such as case control studies, advised by the committee will be carried out.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Home and Health Department plans to submit recent figures on leukaemia clusters for publication in *The Lancet*.

Mr. John MacKay: The figures on leukaemia clusters referred to are contained in a report produced by the information services division of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service on the incidence of leukaemia in the under 25-year-olds in Scotland. The report is to be published in the May edition of the "Health Bulletin".

Dounreay (Hospital Study)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the Yorkhill royal hospital for sick children's study on Dounreay.

Mr. John MacKay: I am not aware of any such study.

Fishing Industry

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the mid-term review will take place of the North sea haddock total allowable catch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Advisory Committee on Fishery Management (ACFM) will be reviewing the state of the North sea haddock stock during the course of its annual meeting in May. We shall consider the case for seeking an increase in the 1987 total allowable catch for this stock once ACFM's advice is available.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the compatibility of provisions of European Economic Community Regulation No. 4027/86 with the common fisheries policy in relation to the allocation to a member state of its own quotas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I am satisfied that the EC regulation 4027/86, which gives power to the Commission to close a fishery when the total allowable catch has been reached, is entirely compatible with quota allocation policies. As I told my hon. Friend on 26 November 1986, at column *252*, it is the Commission's objective in exercising this control to conserve stocks, adjusting quotas in the year following infringement to compensate those who have suffered at the expense of offenders.

Patients (Safety Rails and Gates)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he is having with Strathclyde regional council social work department and Glasgow district housing department to improve the provisions of safety rails and gates fitted in patient homes in the light of the delays in some patients being discharged from hospital about which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill has written to him.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1987, c. *580*]: My hon. Friend the Minister of State has written to the hon. Member and placed a copy in the Library.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new projects applied for Scottish Development Agency funding in each year since 1979; and how many were successful.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *458*]: The only information which is continuously

available since 1979 relates to applications for agency investments, excluding small business division investments. The information is as set out in the table.

	Applications received	*Applications approved*
1979-80	138	20
1980-81	157	14
1981-82	118	24
1982-83	183	36
1983-84	219	44
1984-85	221	35
1985-86	199	33
[1]1986-87	236	25

[1] To 1 March 1987.

From 1983-84 onwards information is also available for small business division investments and for other recognised schemes of assistance, such as local enterprise grants for urban projects. Details for all recognised schemes, including investments, are given in the table.

	Applications received	*Applications approved*
1983-84	1,323	337
1984-85	959	240
1985-86	1,043	295
[1]1986-87	1,101	286

[1] To 1 March 1987.

Applications not approved include applications withdrawn by the applicant, applications for which finance is raised privately, applications not meeting the criteria for the scheme in question and applications rejected on commercial grounds.

TRANSPORT

Bus Services

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the decision of the north-west traffic commissioner that duplicate bus services may only be run when passenger traffic demands; and if he will make a statement in the light of his policy that control over the quantity of buses should be removed.

Mr. David Mitchell: The traffic commissioner for the north-western traffic area has received a letter from the general manager of Merseybus on this subject. The Transport Act 1985 requires services to be run in accordance with the particulars registered in advance with the traffic commissioners. The guidance given by the north-western traffic commissioner is consistent with that purpose and with the terms of the Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services) Regulations 1986. The whole system would be undermined if operators were at liberty to run services without regard to the timetables which they provided on registration.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus routes running *(a)* wholly and *(b)* in part outside the Greater London area are currently operated by London Buses Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: *(a)* Two. *(b)* Thirty-five.

M3-M27 Extension

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the proposed extension of the M3 from Winchester to the M27.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I announced on 10 April the decisions of my right hon. Friends following the 1985 public inquiry.

The independent inspector agreed that the extension of the M3 from Winchester to the M27 was urgently needed and that our proposals for replacing the A33 Winchester bypass by taking the motorway in a cutting across Twyford Down provided the right solution. In view of the representations which we have received since the inquiry about the absence of relevant information on environmental issues, we have concluded that we could not come to a proper decision on the proposals for the Bar End-Compton section without giving a further opportunity for this information to be presented to the inspector.

We have decided to re-open the inquiry into the Bar End-Compton section. The arrangements for this will be announced as soon as possible.

We see no need to hold up the much-needed southern part of the scheme between Compton and the M27. We have accepted the inspector's recommendation that the widening and upgrading of the A33 Otterbourne and Chandlers Ford bypass to form part of the M3 motorway should go ahead. We will start work on this part of the scheme as quickly as possible.

Road and Rail Infrastructure

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the expenditure on *(a)* road and *(b)* rail infrastructure for each year since 1974; and what is the allocation of expenditure forecast each year to 1992 for (i) Yorkshire and Humberside and (ii) Barnsley, West and Penistone at 1974 prices.

Mr. Moore: My Department does not hold information about expenditure on rail infrastructure in this form and detail. Information about expenditure on road infrastructure in the areas in question is not available prior to 1978-79. That which is available for subsequent years is as follows:

£ million at 1974 prices[1]

	(i) Yorkshire and Humberside		*(ii) Barnsley MBC (nearest equivalent to parliamentary constituency)*
	National	*Local*	*Local*
1974-75 to 1977-78	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1978-79	[1]—	22·5	[1]—
1979-80	[1]—	22·5	[1]—
1980-81	[1]—	25·9	[1]—
1981-82	[1]—	18·5	[1]—
1982-83	12·9	17·0	[2]—
1983-84	19·1	14·8	[2]—
1984-85	16·0	13·4	[2]—
1985-86	29·2	14·2	[2]—
1986-87	20·6	[3]14·0	[3]0·6
1987-88	[4]27·6	[3]12·0	[3]0·5
1988-89	[5]—	[6]14·3	[6]1·2
1989-90	[5]—	[6]9·1	[6]0·8
1990-91 to 1992-93	[5]—	[5]—	[5]—

[1] Not available except at disproportionate cost.
[2] Prior to 1986-87, Barnsley was not a highway authority so expenditure on road infrastructure by the council was de minimis.
[3] Capital allocations.
[4] Allocation of planned expenditure.
[5] No useful forecasts can be made.
[6] Forecasts from transport policy and programme plans.
[7] GDP 1974-75 prices.

Driving Tests

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average waiting time for a driving test in Dundee; and what is the current average waiting time in Britain.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The average waiting time for a test in Dundee is 15 weeks, compared with 14 weeks for the country as a whole.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving test centres there are in Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh; and how many test examiners are employed at each.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures are as follows:

Centres	*Examiners*
Dundee	
1	4
Aberdeen	
2 Albert street	3
Clunie place	5
Glasgow	
5 Anniesland	5
Riddrie	3
Rutherglen	4
Shawlands	8
Shettleston	8
Edinburgh	
3 Joppa	5
Newington	3
Parkhead	7

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving tests have been conducted in Dundee in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of tests conducted were:

	Number
1982	6,595
1983	4,390
1984	5,001
1985	5,719
1986	5,745

These figures include tests in Blairgowrie, an outstation of Dundee.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the average annual waiting time for a driving test in Dundee in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not readily available.

The waiting times in April for the last three years were:

	Weeks
April 1985	16
April 1986	16
April 1987	15

Figures for earlier years are not available.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport under what circumstances an air traffic control unit providing an approach control service at an aerodrome is permitted, specifically at night, to transfer in toto its responsibilities concerning the provision of separation of aircraft operating on an instrument flight rules plan to the commander of such an aircraft during his approach to land at that aerodrome.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Air traffic control is the responsibility of the National Air Traffic Services. It tells me that the circumstances in which an air traffic control unit providing an approach service at an aerodrome is permitted at all times, to transfer in toto its responsibilities to provide the separation of aircraft during its approach to land at that aerodrome are laid down in the manual of air traffic services part 1, section 1, chapter 3, paragraph 3, sub-paras *(b)* and *(c)* which states:

> In the vicinity of aerodromes, the standard separation may be reduced if:
>
> *(b)* each aircraft is continuously visible to the pilots of other aircraft concerned, and the pilots report that they can maintain their own separation, or
>
> *(c)* when one aircraft is following another the pilot of the succeeding aircraft reports that he has the other in sight and can maintain separation.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many bus lanes have been removed in Greater London since 1 April 1986; and how many new lanes have been installed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that five new bus lanes have been or are in the process of being installed in Greater London since 1 April 1986 and that four have been or are being removed.

Transport Services (Attacks)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many attacks there have been in the last five years on *(a)* passengers and *(b)* employees on (i) London Regional Transport services or property and (ii) British Rail southern region services or property.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall answer this question shortly.

Graffiti

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost to London Regional Transport of removing graffiti from the underground in each of the past five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport has only recently begun to separate costs of removing graffiti on the underground from overall cleaning costs and figures are not therefore available for the last five years. It estimates, however, that the cost of graffiti cleaning in 1986-87 could amount to as much as £500,000.

Journey-time Savings and Accident Prevention

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport which organisations and individuals were involved in consultations on his Department's evaluation of journey-time savings and accident prevention.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In response to the invitation made to a number of specialists in the field of transport appraisal and others who might wish to comment, we received replies from the following people during the period of consultation which ended on 21 April.

Professor R. E. Allsop of University College, London;
Dr. S. T. Atkins of Southampton University;
Mr. A. Bennet of British Railways Board;
Dr. J. R. Broome of Bristol University;
Dr. P. B. Goodwin of Oxford University;
Professor R. O. Goss of UWIST;
Professor P. J. Hills of Newcastle upon Tyne University;
Professor M. Jones-Lee of Newcastle upon Tyne University;
Mr. A. Marin of the London School of Economics;
Professor G. H. Mooney of Copenhagen University;
Professor D. Pearce of University College London;
Mr. M. Roberts of the MVA Consultancy;
Mr. H. J. Wootton of Wootton Jeffreys plc.

Travelcard

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies are being carried out by his Department or outside consultants into the implications for the London Regional Transport Travelcard of deregulation of bus services.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has commissioned no such studies by outside consultants. All relevant aspects of the extension of bus deregulation to London will be considered before detailed proposals are brought forward.

Passenger Trains (Overcrowding)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek from British Rail statistics on passenger train overcrowding outside London.

Mr. David Mitchell: My officials are still discussing with British Rail appropriate definitions of overcrowding on provincial sector services.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Stamp Duty

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the forecast yield from stamp duty on the sale of (i) dwellings and (ii) securities in 1987-88, and comparable figures for 1957-58, 1967-68 and 1977-78, together with the rates of duty.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is as follows:

(i) Yield

	£ million	
	Residential property	*Stocks and shares*
1957-58	[1]15	21
1967-68	[1]25	45
1977-78	85	187
[2]1987-88	680	890

[1] Total duty on land and buildings. Separate figures for sales of dwellings are not available for these years.
[2] Forecast.

(ii) Rates of duty

Residential Property	*Per cent.*	*Stocks and shares*
1957-58		
Considerations up to £3,500	0·5	All considerations 2 per cent.
Considerations between £3,500 - £4,250	1·0	
Considerations between £4,250 - £5,000	1·5	
Considerations over £5,000	2·0	
1967-68 (to 31 July 1967)		
Considerations up to £4,500	nil	All considerations 1 per cent.
Considerations between £5,500 - £6,000	0·5	
Considerations over £6,000	1·0	
(from 1 August 1967)		
Considerations up to £5,500	nil	
Considerations between £5,500 - £7,000	0·5	
Considerations over £7,000	1·0	
1977-78		Generally 2 per cent.
Considerations up to £15,000	nil	Overseas investors 1 per cent.
Considerations between £15,000 - £20,000	0·5	
Considerations between £20,000 - £25,000	1·0	
Considerations between £25,000 - £30,000	1·5	
Considerations over £30,000	2·0	
1987-88		
Considerations up to £30,000	nil	Generally 0·5 per cent.
Considerations over £30,000	1·0	

Coinage

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the new United Kingdom gold bullion coin, the Britannia, to be available to the public; and what notional legal tender value he intends to ascribe to it and the other denominations of $\frac{1}{2}$ oz, $\frac{1}{4}$ oz and $\frac{1}{10}$oz.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The 1oz Britannia will be available this autumn with the additional denominations available shortly thereafter. Further details of the specification of the coins, including their face values, will be announced in due course.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had about the intention of the Belgian Government to issue commemorative and legal tender coin in ecu denominations; and if he has any similar intentions.

Mr. Ian Stewart: While the Government were aware of the Belgian Government's intentions, neither I nor my ministerial colleagues have held any discussions with representatives of the Belgian Government on this subject. The Government have no plans to issue similar coins in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will announce his conclusions of his review of the size and shape of the various denominations of United Kingdom currency coins; and what proposals he has for change.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government have no plans at present to issue any new coins or to withdraw any existing coins. Naturally, the Government keep all longer term options under constant review. Before any change took place it would be necessary to give all interested parties from industry and commerce, as well as the general public, including the blind, an opportunity to make known their views on the longer term alternatives.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider the regular issue of a crown piece in silver proof and currency metal; and when he expects to issue the next commemorative version of this coin.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Crowns are generally issued to mark important royal occasions. It would not therefore be appropriate to issue them on a regular basis. In the case of any future commemorative issues, an announcement would be made at the appropriate time.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will continue to issue a legal tender currency coin of £2 denomination value.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government have no present plans to issue further £2 coins.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his intention to continue to strike the British gold sovereign and half sovereign; and if such coins will be issued and dated for the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Proof sovereigns and half sovereigns are being struck this year and will bear the date for the current year. There are no plans to strike standard sovereigns and half sovereigns during 1987.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to discuss value added tax with his fellow Finance Ministers of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Brooke: The next meeting of the EC Council of Economic and Finance Ministers is on 11 May. It is not expected that value added tax will be discussed at this meeting. Agenda for later meetings of the Council have not yet been decided.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Brooke: The financial management initiative in 1982 covered a wide range of management reforms. These reforms were all aimed at helping to give better value for money from public expenditure, and it is increasingly unrealistic to try to identify separately the effects of the financial management initiative, of other specific initiatives to manage resources better, and of good management generally.

Progress in Departments' programmes of financial management improvements has included the introduction of top management information systems, budgets for over 1,500 managers with individual responsibility for managing resources, and new information and control systems to set budgets and measure performance. Departments have used these systems to help Ministers and senior officials set and achieve targets for improving efficiency. Some of these improvements can be seen in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56), the Board of Customs and Excise's annual report and management plan, the Board of Inland Revenue's annual report and senior management system, the annual report and accounts from Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Central Office of Information, and the Department for National Savings' annual report. Copies of these documents are in the Library. They show, for example, Customs and Excise's target to increase in real terms the yield from VAT control visits by at least 12 per cent. in 1987-88 and the same amount in 1986-87 on top of an increase of 7 per cent. already achieved in 1985-86. In Her Majesty's Stationery Office, which operates as a trading fund, manpower numbers have been reduced from 6,276 to 3,350 over the last seven years, while turnover has risen to almost £300 million. Financial objectives have been met each year and price increases kept to a minimum. In the Inland Revenue there has been a steady increase in the number of taxpayers dealt with per staff unit.

The Treasury has helped Departments to develop their financial management and monitored their progress. The Public Accounts Committee took evidence on this work from the permanent under-secretary on 1 December 1986.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Snape asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions Her Majesty's Government are having about the extent to which the Channel tunnel international passenger train service operated from 1993 should conform to European Economic Community customs and immigration formalities and about how this is to be achieved.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Customs and Immigration

Mr. Snape asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what consideration his Department is giving to European Economic Community directives and proposals relevant to possible changes in customs and immigration formalities by the beginning of 1993; and what assessment he has made of their implications;

(2) what changes the European Commission has proposed for customs and immigration formalities for general passenger travel between European Economic Community member states, and between European Economic Community member states and other countries, by the beginning of 1993; and what changes at railway crossing points are implied in the proposals;

(3) if any customs and immigration checks for railway passengers travelling between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Eire are carried out on board moving trains; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has as to which railway crossing within the European Economic Community require no customs or immigration formalities;

(5) what information he has as to which crossing points within the European Economic Community require customs or immigration formalities and, of these, which offer such formalities on board moving trains or trains on board ferries, and which offer such formalities on board long-distance passenger trains where customs or immigration staff undertake their work beyond stations adjacent to the member states border.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Railways (Frontier Crossings)

Mr. Snape asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to at which locations and between which countries passenger railway routes, including passenger trains on ferries, cross frontiers between European Economic Community member states, between European Economic Community member states and Scandinavia, between European Economic Community member states and Switzerland and Austria and between European Economic Community member states and Comecon countries.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Payments and Refunds)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state for each year since 1973 *(a)* the overall payments by the Treasury to the European Economic Community, *(b)* the overall payment made by the European Economic Community to Britain in refunds and all other payments, *(c)* the total payments and refunds made to the Treasury and *(d)* the net cost to the Treasury.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested concerning public sector contributions and receipts to and from the Community budget is set out in the table. The Commission does not provide member states with details of payments made directly to private sector organisations. The overall payment made by the EEC to Britain is therefore not available.

£ million

	Gross payments	*Receipts other than refunds*	*Gross refunds*	*VAT abatements*	*Net Total*[1]
1973	181	79	—	—	102
1974	179	150	—	—	29
1975	342	398	—	—	−56
1976	463	296	—	—	167
1977	737	368	—	—	369
1978	1,348	526	—	—	822
1979	1,606	659	—	—	947
1980	1,767	963	98	—	706
1981	2,174	1,084	693	—	397
1982	2,863	1,238	1,019	—	606
1983	2,976	1,522	807	—	647
1984	3,204	2,020	528	—	656
1985	[2]3,940	1,905	61	166	1,808
1986	4,493	2,219	—	1,701	572

[1] Because of rounding the net contribution figures may not equal exactly those for our gross contribution less refunds/abatements and receipts.
[2] Payments by the United Kingdom under the 1984 and 1985 intergovernmental agreements were both made in the 1985 calendar year and are shown as payments in that year.

Taxation (Yield)

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the estimated yield from all sources of taxation including excise and other duties for 1987-88; what was the comparable yield for 1978-79 revalued at 1987-88 prices; and if he will publish a breakdown by categories of the real increase in taxes between 1978-79 and 1987-88 similar to that in his answer of 25 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns 426-7;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the yield in real terms in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* what he is now proposing for 1987-88 in (i) direct taxes, including national insurance and (ii) indirect taxes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Government Advertising

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the total amount spent by the Central Office of Information and Government Departments on advertising in newspapers, breaking down the totals by *(a)* individual named campaigns and *(b)* national dailies, national Sundays, regional evenings and others.

Mr. Brooke: The information is not available in the form requested. The estimated expenditure by COI in the 1986-87 financial year is:

	£
National Dailies	14,861,387
National Sundays	8,145,337
Provincials	3,835,710
Others	7,041,063
Total	33,883,497

The main departmental campaigns were:

AIDS	(DHSS)
Misuse of Drugs	(DHSS)
Action for jobs	Department of Employment

Energy Efficiency	**Department of Energy**	**Restart**	**(MSC)**
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	**(MSC)**	**Youth Training Scheme**	**(MSC)**
		Services Recruitment	**(MOD)**

Budget

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 6 April, *Official Report*, columns *67-68*, if he will give the gains per average person in each of the income ranges given from the Budget proposals *(a)* on an un-indexed basis and *(b)* net of indexation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the size of the cut in the standard rate of income tax required in 1987-88 to reduce the total tax payments, including income tax, national insurance contributions, indirect taxes, less child benefit where appropriate, for those on *(a)* three quarters and *(b)* 100 per cent. of average earnings in the categories: (i) single people, (ii) married couples and (iii) married couples with two and four children in each case to *(x)* the same sum of money and *(y)* the same proportion of gross earnings as in 1978-79;

(2) if he will construct an index with 1978-79 equalling 100, of the changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions for each subsequent year for a taxpayer on *(a)* half, *(b)* two thirds, *(c)* average, *(d)* five times and *(e)* 10 times average earnings for households where the taxpayer is (i) single, (ii) married, no children (iii) married with two children and (iv) married with four children, in all cases assuming the wife does not work, using a similar form to his answer of 27 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns *606-608*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Leeds-Bradford Airport (Customs Clearance)

Mr. Madden asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from Freight Forwarders in the Leeds-Bradford area about its proposals to introduce a system of customs clearance by direct computer link covering Leeds-Bradford airport and Leeds Containers base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *450*]: I have received no representations from Freight Forwarders about an application for direct input facilities to the customs computer from Leeds-Bradford airport and Leeds Container base. I am aware of the application it has made, and would refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 7 April at column *165*.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received proposing the development of a customs and excise depot at the Leeds-Bradford airport.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *450*]: I have received no representations proposing the development of a customs and excise depot at Leeds-Bradford airport. Customs clearance facilities already exist at the airport. An application for direct input facilities to the customs computer from this location has been made by the Yorkshire DTI Group, and I would refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 7 April at column *165*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

INLA (Feud)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will name all those persons who are considered by the security forces to have been murdered as a result of the Irish National Liberation Army feud in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The publication of such information could hamper police investigations. It is not our practice to speculate on the motives behind particular terrorist murders.

Animal Health

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the incidence of brucellosis and tuberculosis in cattle in *(a)* South Armagh and *(b)* other parts of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: At present there are no cattle herds in Northern Ireland under restriction for brucellosis.

Incidence of bovine tuberculosis in Northern Ireland is at a very low level, on average 1·35 per cent. of herds. The incidence in the divisional veterinary office areas, which include South Armagh, is slightly lower at between 1·14 per cent. and 1·17 per cent.

Industrial Development

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the Industrial Development Board to extend the pilot scheme to stimulate industrial development to Newry/Armagh.

Mr. Viggers: As I indicated in my previous answer to the hon. Gentleman on 21 November 1986, at column *386*, the Industrial Development Board's local initiative was introduced on a trial basis to two areas, Carrickfergus and Londonderry. As it is only six months since the launch of the initiative, it is too early to assess its effectiveness. The IDB will review the initiative after 18 months operation and in the light of this review decide if it should be extended to other selected areas of Northern Ireland.

Cereals

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the European Economic Community Commission has any proposals to increase the co-responsibility levy on cereals in the current year.

Mr. Viggers: No.

Newry and District Community Services Council

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what finances will be made available to help the Newry and district community services council to purchase its present building in Marcus square which acts as an umbrella for the voluntary organisations.

Dr. Mawhinney: Applications for grant-aid would have to be made to the Southern Health and Social Services

Board and the Newry and Mourne district council and it would be for decision by these bodies whether to make funds available within their respective budgets.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board; what were the subjects discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: My noble Friend, the Minister with responsibility for agriculture in Northern Ireland, met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board on 30 April 1986. Internal United Kingdom trade in pasteurised milk was discussed.

Agriculture

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet his counterpart from the Irish Republic to discuss designing a common agricultural policy for the whole of Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: No.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many (i) life sentence prisoners and (ii) prisoners detained during the pleasure of the Secretary of State have been released on licence each year since 1980; how many in each category were Loyalist, Republican and undifferentiated prisoners; and what was the average length of sentence served by Loyalists, Republican and undifferentiated prisoners in each category;

(2) how many (i) life sentence prisoners and (ii) prisoners detained during the pleasure of the Secretary of State have been given release dates in each year since the setting up of the Northern Ireland life sentence review board; and how many in each category were Loyalist, Republican and undifferentiated prisoners;

(3) how many (i) life sentence prisoners and (ii) prisoners detained during the pleasure of the Secretary of State there are in Northern Ireland's prisons, excluding those who have been given release dates; and how many in each category are Loyalist, Republican and undifferentiated prisoners.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Year	Life			SOSP			
	Loyalist	Republican	Other	Loyalist	Republican	Other	Totals
Persons serving life/SOSP released on licence since 1980 by believed affiliation at the time of arrest and average period served							
1980	—	1	1	—	—	—	2
1981	1	1	1	—	1	—	4
1982	1	—	5	—	—	1	7
1983	1	—	1	2	—	—	4
1984	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
1985	2	2	—	5	2	—	11
1986	1	2	[1]1+(1)	5	5	—	[1]14+(1)
1987	4	4	—	3	3	—	14
Totals	12	10	[1]9+(1)	15	11	1	[1]58+(1)
Average years served	11·49	10·79	10·68	10·30	9·99	10·33	—
Persons serving life/SOSP given release dates by believed affiliation at the time of arrest since the present life sentence review board was established in March 1983							
1983	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1984	1	—	—	3	3	—	7
1985	1	1	1	7	5	—	15
1986	7	8	2	[2]4+(2)	6	—	[2]27+(2)
1987	2	1	1	—	1	—	5
Totals	11	10	4	[2]14+(2)	15	—	[2]54+(2)

Note: This table does not include one prisoner released on medical grounds in 1984.

[1] One person originally released on licence in August 1977 had his licence revoked in February 1983; he was subsequently re-released on licence October 1986.

[2] Two prisoners given release dates in February 1986 had them withdrawn on 13 February 1987.

Persons serving life/SOSP in Northern Ireland prisons by their believed affiliation at the time of arrest, excluding those given provisional release dates, as at 15 April 1987

Loyalist	Life			SOSP				
	Republican	Other	Total	Loyalist	Republican	Other	Total	Overall Total
213	158	28	399	9	24	1	34	433

DEFENCE

Air Misses

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the total number of air misses recorded in the United Kingdom airspace in each year since 1974; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figures into incidents involving *(a)* two civil aircraft, *(b)* two military aircraft and *(c)* one civil and one military aircraft;

(2) how many of the air misses recorded in United Kingdom airspace in each year since 1974 took place at or below 2,000 ft above ground level.

Mr. Freeman: Total numbers of air misses in United Kingdom airspace are contained in the CAA publication CAP 526, "UK Airmiss Statistics," a copy of which has been placed in the Library. It is our long-standing policy not to release more detailed statistics on air misses involving military aircraft because in isolation from other, classified, information they can be misleading and do not provide an accurate indicator of flight safety.

NATO Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Centre

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if a decision has yet been made by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation on the location of the proposed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation tactical fighter weapons training centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A decision has not yet been made on the location of the proposed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation tactical fighter weapons training centre. The matter is still being studied by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Low-Level Flying

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the Royal Air Force's flying training at low level is currently conducted in each of the following areas *(a)* Canada, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(d)* Cyprus, *(e)* Sardinia, *(f)* the Falkland Islands, *(g)* the Netherlands, *(h)* other European locations and *(i)* other non-European locations.

Mr. Freeman: We do not keep records of the proportion of the Royal Air Force's training at low level conducted in the countries listed, and it would require disproportionate effort to obtain this information from available statistics.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the proportionate increase in the number of night low-flying training sorties carried out by the Royal Air Force as a result of the introduction of the Harrier GR5.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to say in advance of the introduction of the Harrier GR5 what effect this will have on night low-flying training sorties. This is not likely to be clear until the early 1990s. If, however, there is an increase, it will relate closely to the number of Harrier GR5s to be based in the United Kingdom, and is likely to be small.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if flying at less than 100 ft above ground level is authorised anywhere in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Light, fixed-wing aircraft of the Army Air Corps may be authorised to fly at not less than 50 ft minimum separation distance in specially selected and surveyed areas. Throughout the United Kingdom low-flying system helicopters may fly below 100 ft minimum separation distance. However, to limit disturbance to the public, fast jet aircraft and heavy propeller aircraft are not authorised in peace-time to fly at less than 100 ft above ground level although flying at lower levels would almost certainly be necessary in war-time, to avoid enemy defensive systems.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level military training sorties were flown over the United Kingdom by United States Air Force F-111s aircraft in each year since 1974.

Mr. Freeman: Records of low-level training sorties by aircraft type were not kept until 1985, when United States Air Force F-111 flew 11,260 sorties, and 11,148 during 1986.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many enquiries have been received by his Department in each year since 1974 about low-flying training; and how many of these were complaints about disturbance from low flying aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: Of the correspondence received, central records are kept only of low-flying complaints. These are as follows:

Year	*Numbers*
1974	1,467
1975	1,526
1976	1,279
1977	1,730
1978	2,290
1979	4,004
1980	3,365
1981	4,502
1982	3,304
1983	5,164
1984	5,609
1985	4,206
1986	5,304
1987	[1]451

[1] Up to 28 February.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of military low-level training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in 1986 was accounted for by *(a)* fast jets, *(b)* light jet trainers, *(c)* heavy propeller-driven aircraft, *(d)* light propeller-driven aircraft and *(e)* helicopters.

Mr. Freeman: The proportion of military low-level training sorties flown over the United Kingdom during 1986 for each of the categories stated was as follows:

	Per cent.
Fast jets	61
Light jet trainers	10
Heavy propeller-driven aircraft	2
Light propeller-driven aircraft	1
Helicopters	26

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of low-level military training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in each year since 1974.

Mr. Freeman: The total number of military low level training sorties flown in the United Kingdom was as follows:

	Number
1974	71,000
1975	78,000

	Number
1976	77,700
1977	76,000
1978	76,000
1979	108,860
1980	122,850
1981	131,840
1982	130,310
1983	128,000
1984	133,500
1985	141,760
1986	151,160
1987	[1]20,749

[1] Up to 28 February.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the changes made since 1974 in the basis of calculation of the numbers of military low-level training sorties over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1974 only one change has been made in the calculation of military low-level training sorties over the United Kingdom. Prior to 1985 the number of sorties flown was estimated from the total number of movements logged between low flying areas. Since 1985, the number of sorties flown has been recorded directly. The introduction of the new United Kingdom low-flying system in 1979 did not affect the basis of the calculation of sortie numbers.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of low-level military training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in each year since 1974 was represented by aircraft from *(a)* the Royal Air Force, *(b)* other British military services, *(c)* the United States Air Force, *(d)* other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation air forces and *(e)* non-NATO air forces.

Mr. Freeman: Before 1985 statistics of sorties by operating authority were not kept. Since then statistics have been kept, although not in the precise form requested. Details are as follows:

Operating authority	*Proportion of sorties flown*	
	1985	*1986*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
British Military	81	82
USAF	18	17
Others	1	1

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date low-level flying by British military aircraft over the United Kingdom at a minimum height of 100 ft above ground level was first authorised.

Mr. Freeman: Ultra low flying, that is flying below 250 ft, has been practised by the RAF since the second world war. It has, however, always been specially authorised, and strictly limited to avoid undue disturbance to the public. In more recent years out policy has been to concentrate such flying in specially designated, sparsely populated, areas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of military air exercises conducted over the United Kingdom in each year since 1974 in which low-level flying down to 100 ft above ground level was authorised.

Mr. Freeman: No military air exercises in the United Kingdom involve flying below a level of 250 ft. Exercises involving ultra low flying, that is below this and down to 100 ft, are normally held in the United States of America and Canada. Some, strictly limited, work-up training for these exercises does take place in the United Kingdom, but within specially designated, sparsely populated areas.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of military low-level training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in 1986 involved authorisation to fly not below *(a)* 1,500 ft, *(b)* 1,000 ft, *(c)* 500 ft, *(d)* 250 ft, *(e)* 200 ft, *(f)* 150 ft and *(g)* 100 ft.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available.

Advertising

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of his Department's promotional and advertising budget is spent on regional and local newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure on advertising and promotional material in all media by the Ministry of Defence, and the Central Office of Information on our behalf, amounted to some £10·5 million in 1986-87, predominantly for service and civilian recruitment purposes. Advertising and promotional work is placed with the appropriate medium in the light of the content and objectives addressed. About £8 million was spent with newspapers. A breakdown between the national and local press is not readily available in all cases but where these items are separately recorded it is possible to identify some £0·6 million spent with regional and local newspapers.

Japanese Prisoners of War

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations have been received concerning the possibility of securing compensation from the Japanese Government for prisoners of war held by the Japanese, and who may have been used for trials of germ warfare techniques; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 28 November 1986 at column *377*. Since that date, the Ministry has received a further 10 inquiries. Of these, two had been addressed to the Prime Minister and eight to Ministers. For some time we have been investigating the allegations that the Japanese experimented on Allied prisoners of war. Exhaustive searches have been made of a wide range of surviving contemporary files on the treatment of POWs in the far east. The result of these inquiries is that we have no evidence to support allegations that the Japanese experimented on Allied POWs.

Spearfish Torpedo Weapon System

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the division or divisions in his Department which is or are in charge of the Spearfish torpedo weapon system programme; and whether a single system contractor has been selected for this project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Within my Department the director general underwater weapons (naval) is in charge of the Spearfish torpedo weapon system programme. We do not expect to make a decision about appointing a single

system contractor until the existing Spearfish torpedo development and initial production contract has been completed.

Equestrian Events

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 27 March, *Official Report*, column *287*, if he will list the authorised activities for which military transport can be used for the conveyance of privately owned horses.

Mr. Freeman: Authorised travel at public expense may be granted for any equestrian sport in which the service man is participating, either individually or as a member of a team, in a representative capacity.

Non-Strategic Nuclear Forces

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Britain has entered any formal note of dissent on any North Atlantic Treaty Organisation decisions relating to non-strategic nucler forces since 1979.

Mr. Stanley: I am not aware of any.

Lance Missile

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether British Ministers, officials and serving officers of the armed forces have taken part in any discussions with their United States counterparts on an enhanced radiation/reduced blast warhead for Lance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any such discussions.

Montebello Nuclear Planning Group

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government took part in the preparation of the high level group's report to the Montebello nuclear planning group meeting.

Mr. Stanley: Yes.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence why there was no mention of the modernisation component of the Montebello nuclear planning group decision of October 1983 in the subsequent 1984 Defence Estimates.

Mr. Stanley: I assume the hon. Member is referring to paragraphs 121 to 123 of "The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984". The purpose of these paragraphs was to highlight the main feature of the Montebello decision, namely the very substantial reductions agreed in NATO's land-based stockpile. The paragraphs also explain the background to the Montebello review, explaining that the starting point was NATO's requirement for

"adequate numbers of effective intermediate and short range nuclear forces"

for the purposes of deterrence. The modernisation component was referred to in paragraph 321 of "The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" and the full text of the Montebello communiqué, including reference to the modernisation component, was placed in the Library after the Montebello meeting.

NATO (Nuclear Artillery Warheads)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation defence planning committee has agreed any proposal from SACEUR for modern new technology nuclear artillery warheads since 1977.

Mr. Stanley: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to SACEUR's biennial force proposals. The detail of NATO force proposals and force goals is classified.

Air-to-Surface Nuclear Missile

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there is any British or North Atlantic Treaty Organisation staff target, force goal or other plan for a standoff air-to-surface nuclear missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no British staff target for such a weapon. The details of NATO force goals are classified.

BAOR (Battlefield Nuclear Weapons)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the first new battlefield nuclear weapons will be in service with the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As has already been made clear, no decisions on modernisation as it affects British forces have yet been taken. If and when such decisions are taken, a report will be made to the House at the appropriate time.

W-79 Nuclear Artillery Shells

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Britain took part in any consultations with the United States prior to United States' deployment of W-79 nuclear artillery shells in Germany.

Mr. Stanley: As this was a matter between the Governments of the United States and the Federal Republic, we were informed but not consulted.

NATO (Real Estate)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost to the United Kingdom of the real estate provided as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation host nation support.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not readily available; nor would it be easy to assess, for example, the commercial value of a large number of military airfields.

Contingency Allowance (Defence Estimates)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the 3·5 per cent. contingency allowance has been spent, per year, since the publication of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" Cmnd. 8288.

Mr. Stanley: A 3·5 per cent contingency spread over 10 years was assumed in the programme embodied in Cmnd 8288 to allow flexibility to cope with unquantified costs at the time. It has subsequently varied in size from year to year.

If the hon. Member is wishing to know the percentage difference between outturn expenditure and planned expenditure in each year since 1982-83, the information is as follows:

	Per cent.
1982-83	−0·1
1983-84	−1·5
1984-85	−0·7
1985-86	−1·4
[1]1986-87	−2·6

[1] Estimate.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Governments concerning the procedure for the political authorisation of the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions.

I also refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 25 June 1986 at columns 163-4.

Phantom Squadrons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Phantom squadrons are currently deployed in the United Kingdom air defence role.

Mr. Stanley: Five.

Air Defences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with NATO allies concerning United Kingdom air defences.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend holds regular meetings with NATO colleagues collectively and individually, at which defence matters of mutual interest are discussed, including from time to time matters relevant to United Kingdom air defence. Most recently, in the course of my right hon. Friend's meeting with M. Giraud on 9-10 March, the decision of both countries to purchase AWACS was discussed, as mentioned in my right hon. Friend's press statement, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom air defences.

Mr. Stanley: Our air defences are regularly tested in national and NATO exercises and the Royal Air Force achieves consistently very high standards in these demanding evaluations. Looking to the future, the major modernisation programme in which we are engaged is now well advanced. This includes the build up of the Tornado F2/F3, whose excellent range and loiter capability make it ideally suited for the air defence role; a comprehensive modernisation of our ground-based radars and command and control systems; and the provision of a modern and effective airborne early warning capability through the purchase of E3A. The modernisation programme when complete will have achieved a major transformation of our air defence capabilities.

Soviet Aircraft (Attack Capability)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of Soviet aircraft which are presently capable of attacking the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: Over 500 Soviet aircraft are currently based within sufficient range of the United Kingdom as to be able to attack the United Kingdom without air-to-air refuelling. Most of these aircraft can attack with either nuclear or conventional weapons. However, only a proportion of the aircraft are likely to have the United Kingdom as their initial target.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated number of Soviet aircraft capable of carrying anti-ship missiles which are based in the northern region.

Mr. Stanley: About 130 Soviet naval medium bombers capable of carrying anti-ship missiles are deployed with the Soviet northern fleet and Baltic fleet air forces. In addition, approximately 300 Soviet air force heavy and medium bombers are based within range of northern waters. A proportion of this force is capable of carrying anti-ship missiles and could be allocated for maritime tasks.

Air Defence Ground Environment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of United Kingdom air defence ground environment to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of the improved UKADGE system has been to date: £348 million (FY 86-87 prices) for the command and control system, new radars and communications. In addition, £44 million (outturn prices) has been spent for associated work services. The contracts for the system are at fixed prices. Some 50 per cent. of the overall cost will be recovered from NATO.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when United Kingdom air defence ground environment will be completed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The improved UKADGE system will be progressively brought into operation within the next few years. Our priority throughout the transition from the old to the new system will be to ensure that the United Kingdom air defence system will remain fully operational and effective.

Bloodhound Missile

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the Bloodhound missile will be withdrawn from Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Stanley: It is expected that the Bloodhound missile will remain in RAF service into the next century.

Hall and Watts (Contracts)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list any contracts his Department has made since 1979 with Hall and Watts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of defence contracts, of a total value of less than £1 million have been placed with Hall and Watts since 1982. The statistics for the years

prior to that date are not readily available. It is not my Department's practice, for reasons of commercial confidentiality, to give details of individual contracts.

Lightning Squadrons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Lightning squadrons are currently employed in the United Kingdom air defence role.

Mr. Stanley: Two.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the Lightning aircraft will be withdrawn from Royal Air Force service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The Lightnings will withdraw from service as the Tornado F3 squadrons form over the next few years.

NH-90 Helicopter

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has any plans to withdraw from the NH-90 helicopter project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 9 April at columns *470-71*.

Nuclear Shell (155mm Artillery)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the development of a new nuclear shell for 155 mm artillery.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government support the need for force modernisation as a necessary part of the rationalisation and reduction of NATO's post-Montebello land-based stockpile in Europe. However, as has been made clear to the House on numerous occasions, no decisions have been taken with regard to the modernisation of weapons in service with British forces.

HMS Upholder

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when HMS Upholder will enter Royal Navy service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 17 July 1984 at column *839* of the *Official Report*.

Atlantic Convoy

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the Royal Navy last carried out an exercise which involved the formation and escort of a convoy across the Atlantic.

Mr. Stanley: The Royal Navy, in conjunction with other NATO navies, regularly practises the protection of convoys. The last exercise involving a convoy across the Atlantic was the NATO exercise Ocean Safari in August-September 1985 referred to in paragraph 2 of Annex B of "The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-I).

Norwegian and Barents Seas (Deployment)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many times in the last four years Royal Navy vessels have been deployed in the Barents sea.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 10 February 1987 at column *185*.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department has had with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies concerning the forward deployment of naval forces in the Norwegian and Barents seas.

Mr. Stanley: My Department regularly discusses with our NATO allies many aspects of naval strategy, including deployments in all the waters in which NATO forces might need to operate.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the vulnerability of aircraft carriers and ASW carriers operating in the Barents or Norwegian seas in the time of war.

Mr. Stanley: Our plans take into account the threats likely to be faced by Royal Navy ships in all the waters in which they might need to operate.

NATO Exercises (Losses)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when was the last time that a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation aircraft carrier or ASW carrier was declared sunk during an exercise.

Mr. Stanley: Carriers are assigned to NATO only in NATO-sponsored exercises, the details of whose scenarios and play are classified.

Soviet Navy (Atlantic Exercise)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the Soviet navy last carried out a major exercise in the Atlantic which demonstrated a threat to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation sea lines of communication.

Mr. Stanley: The Soviet Navy last demonstrated its ability to deploy a wide range of naval forces into the Atlantic on a large scale in July 1985, when surface ships, submarines, and aircraft of the Soviet Northern Fleet operated in the Atlantic as part of a major naval exercise. Aspects of this exercise demonstrated the intention to carry out operations in an area through which NATO sea lines of communication pass. A significant Soviet submarine deployment in the western Atlantic is in progress.

Nuclear Missiles

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish his Department's assessment of the numbers of short-range, intermediate-range nuclear force missiles on each side that led to his assertion, *Official Report*, 9 March column 40, that the Soviet Union has a 9:1 superiority in these missiles; what is his Department's assessment of the number of launchers on each side; and what is his Department's assessment of the accuracy and range of Soviet FROG and SCUD missiles.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend's reference to the Soviet Union's 9:1 SRINF superiority was based on the

figures given in Figure 15 of Annex A of "The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd 9763-I) showing the Warsaw Pact having 650 Scud and Scaleboard-SS22launchers compared with NATO's 72 Pershing 1 launchers. Detailed assessments of the ranges and accuracy of Soviet missiles are classified. I am able to provide the following approximate figures for maximum range:

	km
Scud	300
Frog	70

NATO Force Goals (Artillery and Missiles)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are North Atlantic Treaty Organisation force goals for *(a)* new nuclear artillery shells, *(b)* new nuclear surface-to-surface missiles and *(c)* new nuclear air-to-surface missiles.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Meriowydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 25 July 1986 at column *644*.

RAF Binbrook

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now able to make an announcement on the future of RAF Binbrook.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot add at present to what was said by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces at columns 1118-19 in the debate on the Royal Air Force on 22 January.

Sea Wolf Missile

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to award contracts for the development of the Sea Wolf missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I presume that the hon. Member is referring to the conventional and vertical launch Sea Wolf missile. I do not expect to award any further development contracts. The conventional launch missile is now in service and a contract for development of the vertical launch sea wolf missile was placed in 1984.

Territorial Units (South-West)

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the turnover of young people in Territorial units in the south-west; and what steps are proposed to attract youngsters of the right calibre.

Mr. Freeman: Figures on the turnover of young people in territorial units in the south-west are not held centrally and cannot be provided without a disproportionate amount of effort. The current overall turnover for the Territorial Army is 34·33 per cent. per annum. The Territorial Army is open to men between the ages of 17½ and 56, depending on the type of unit they wish to join, the type of engagement and their previous military experience. There are two types of engagement for youngsters who are too young to join as adult soldiers; the young soldier who may join at between 17 and 17½, and the junior soldier who may in limited numbers enlist at ages between 15 and 17 amongst others as trumpeters, buglers, drummers, pipers or bandsmen. Young men reaching the end of their Army Cadet Force service are encouraged to enlist into the Territorial Army.

Foreign Service Men

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many foreign service men and from what country were stationed in the United Kingdom on 1 July 1979 and for each year to date.

Mr. Stanley: As far as United States service men are concerned, these figures are not collected centrally, but the approximate number of United States service men stationed in the United Kingdom as at 31 December 1979 and for each year since were as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979	25,500
1980	27,500
1981	27,500
1982	29,000
1983	31,000
1984	31,000
1985	31,000
1986	31,500

Information relating to the numbers and nationalities of foreign service men in NATO posts and on exchange attachments and training courses in the United Kingdom for the years since 1979 is not held centrally and could not be compiled except at disproportionate cost.

Military Bases

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many military bases in the United Kingdom are *(a)* under United Kingdom command *(b)* under United States command and *(c)* under joint command.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current order position in respect of the European fighter aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No European fighter aircraft have as yet been ordered. In October 1986 my right hon. Friend signed the general memorandum of understanding for the programme with his fellow Defence Ministers from Germany, Italy and Spain. The international project definition phase ended in September 1986 and the nations are currently evaluating the outcome, with a view to deciding whether to proceed to full development, which is currently planned to begin later this year. In the meantime industry is continuing to work on risk-reducing activities with the aim of refining the design of the aircraft and engines.

Saudi Arabia (Submarines)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the costs, and how they will be met, of the training and support package offered by the Royal Navy in conjunction with VSEL to supply Saudi Arabia with submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of the training and support packages offered to the Saudis must depend upon the extent of those packages. This is unlikely to be resolved until the completion of detailed negotiations with the Saudis. As to how these costs would be met, it is intended that VSEL's offer, which is one of five competing bids, would be the subject of a Firm to Government agreement between VSEL and the Government of Saudi Arabia. In this case all sums due to the UK MOD would be paid by VSEL.

Visiting Forces Act

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many reports he received from American forces in the United Kingdom about breaches of United Kingdom law in relation to which no action was taken because of the grant of immunity under the Visiting Forces Act.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question to the Home Department today.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the number of unemployed claimants drawing housing benefit, distinguishing between those drawing supplementary benefit, and thereby being eligible for housing benefit and those on national insurance benefit who also claim housing benefit.

Mr. Lyell: There are four broad categories of unemployed people receiving housing benefit. The overall numbers and categories requested are best indicated by reference to claimants receiving rate rebates. The estimates of the average number of unemployed people receiving rate rebates are as follows:

Great Britain, 1986-87

	Thousands
(a) Receiving certificated rate rebate, unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit	160
(b) Receiving certificated rate rebate and supplementary benefit	950
(c) Receiving standard rate rebate and unemployment benefit	100
(d) Receiving standard rate rebate	80
Total	1,290

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from local authorities about the adequacy of his subsidy allocation for preparation costs to be incurred for the introduction of changes to the housing benefit scheme in April 1988.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made with local authorities to inform him of the amount by which owner-occupier claimants miss out on housing benefit supplement so that later claims can take advantage of his arrangements to allow them to escape the mortgage trap.

Mr. Major: Special arrangements are not necessary. A condition for receiving housing benefit supplement is that a person has failed to qualify for normal supplementary benefit solely on income grounds. Claimants who are refused supplementary benefit under the normal rules solely because of the mortgage interest limitation are advised to claim again after 16 weeks, whether or not they receive housing benefit supplement.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why, in the light of his undertaking to local authorities they would have 12 months to prepare for the introduction of the new housing benefit arrangements effective from April 1988, he has not yet tabled regulations and issued guidance on this subject.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to lay regulations for the 1988 housing benefit reforms.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *503*]: The regulations for the 1988 housing benefit reforms will be laid before Parliament when the Government's proposals on benefit rates are finalised in the autumn. The draft currently contains purely illustrative rates and it is not possible to legislate on the basis of figures which will not be implemented.

We are, however, committed to publishing our firm proposals on the detailed structure of the new scheme as soon as possible, so that local authorities have adequate time to prepare. The local authority associations made a very large number of helpful comments during consultation on the regulations and these are now being considered urgently.

I have informed the associations that the revised regulations will be made available to local authorities in draft around the end of this month. Guidance on the key areas of change will follow shortly after. Copies of the regulations and the guidance will be placed in the Library.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants have been refused single discretionary payments in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lyell: The number of single payments refused in each of the last three years is as follows:

Year (May-April)	*Number of payments refused*
1984-85	722,852
1985-86	1,120,181
1986-87	[1] 1,885,788

[1] Provisional figures for period May to March only.

Source: Management Information Statistics (100 per cent. count).

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the supplementary benefit payable on account of someone in residential care is intended to cover the cost of day-care facilities; who is liable to meet the charge for such a person residing in a private home but receiving day-care provided by a voluntary organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The supplementary benefit board and lodging allowance for people in residential care homes contains no specific allocations for particular items of

expenditure. Under the Residential Care Homes Regulations 1984 the proprietor of a private home is required, having regard to the size of the home and the number, age, sex and condition of residents, to make suitable arrangements for the training, occupation and recreation of residents. If the proprietor makes arrangements with a voluntary organisation to provide such facilities in the home or elsewhere he would then be liable for any charge levied by the voluntary organisation and may take this into account in fixing the charges payable by residents. Residents who are entitled to supplementary benefit receive help with their charges up to the national limits.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect British Gas vouchers will have on entitlement to supplementary benefit, including single payments for fuel costs.

Mr. Major: The vouchers that I understand will start to become payable to British Gas Shareholders from 30 June 1987 will be treated for supplementary benefit purposes as income from capital and will be disregarded. The normal capital rules for weekly and single payments of supplementary benefit will continue to apply to the value of the shares themselves.

Tay-Sachs Disease

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to avert the closure of the Prince Philip paediatric unit at Guys hospital and the ending of its unique work screening for Tay-Sachs disorder; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: There is no question of the Prince Philip paediatric department laboratory closing. Work on screening for Tay-Sachs disorder will continue though the level of funding and activity is still under consideration.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire on 31 March, *Official Report*, column *488*, if he will take steps to obtain and publish a list of all registered nursing homes which are within the Mid-Staffordshire parliamentary constituency but which are outside the Mid-Staffordshire health authority.

Mrs. Currie: Information by parliamentary constituency is not held centrally. I now understand that my hon. Friend's constituency extends to parts of south-east Staffordshire health district. Following is a list of homes registered as at 31 December 1986 by south-east Staffordshire health authority.

Institutions registered with South-East Staffordshire district health authority under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Position as at 31 December 1986[1]

Dower House Private Nursing Home, Rolleston on Dove, Staffordshire.

The Oaks Private Nursing Home, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire.

St. Giles Hospice, Lichfield, Staffordshire.

Charlotte James Nursing Home, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire.

Little Aston Nursing Home, Sutton Coldfield.

Bramshall Old Rectory Nursing and Residential Home, Uttoxeter.[2]

Kings Bromley Private Nursing Home, Kings Bromley, Staffordshire.[2]

[1] Provisional list for 1986.

[2] Present for the first time in 1986 returns.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of long-stay patients discharged from each mental handicap hospital in England and Wales since 1981.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the number of people discharged from each National Health Service mental handicap hospital in England after a length of stay of five years or more, for each year from 1981 to 1985. Mental handicap hospitals and units are those which contain beds for the treatment of mentally handicapped people only. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales.

Discharges from mental-handicap hospitals of patients having a length of stay of five years or more, England, 1981-85

Health authority and Hospital	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
NORTHERN REGION					
North Tees					
Fairbrook	0	0	0	—	—
Aysgarth	—	—	—	0	0
South Tees					
Bankfield Court	—	—	—	—	0
South Cumbria					
Stafford House	—	—	—	—	0
West Cumbria					
Dovenby Hall	15	7	5	6	16
Darlington					
Aycliffe: including; Belle Vue Grove	11	10	5	28	13
Durham					
Earls House	13	10	19	16	15
Northumberland					
Northgate and District: including; Silverton House, Bow Villa	11	6	5	6	10
Prudhoe	74	8	8	21	12
South Tyneside					
Monkton Hall	—	—	—	1	0
Sunderland					
Grindon Hall	—	—	—	—	0

Health authority and Hospital	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
YORKSHIRE REGION					
Hull					
Brandesburton: including; Cherry Burton Hostel, Astral Gardens	8	28	4	3	2
Winestead Hall	1	1	6	5	2
Tilworth Grange	1	10	0	0	0
Keyingham	19	—	—	—	—
Grimsby					
Caistor	2	2	[illegible]	12	2
Scunthorpe					
Rawcliffe Hall	21	0	2	3	8
North Allerton					
Thornton Lodge	0	0	0	0	0
York					
Claypenny: including; Tadcaster Hostel	10	26	3	4	31
Harrogate					
Whixley: including; Bondgate Hostel	6	19	2	3	12
Bradford					
Westwood: including; Green Lane Hall, Ashfield House	23	7	15	22	12
Airedale					
Castleberg	3	3	2	2	12
Calderdale					
Stansfield View: including; Fielden	7	12	13	9	7
Huddersfield					
The Mansion Huddersfield: including; Lindley Cottage, Dale Bank	3	1	17	1	19
Leeds Eastern					
Meanwood Park	8	8	4	17	10
Wharf Grange	0	0	0	0	0
Wakefield					
Fieldhead	7	3	5	7	39
TRENT REGION					
North Derbyshire					
Ridgeway	0	1	0	2	8
Whittington Hall: including; Mastin Moor	2	3	3	2	2
Dronfield	0	4	1	0	—
Amberley House	1	1	3	1	0
South Derbyshire					
Bingham House Hostel	0	1	0	0	2
Makeney	2	0	1	1	3
Aston Hall: including; Milner House (Children), Craigmore, The Retreat	10	28	11	14	15
Leicestershire					
The Glenfrith Group: including; Mountsorrell, Stoneygate Hostel, Kibworth Hall, Montrose Court, Billesdon Hostel, Gorse Hill, Glengate, Hinckley Cottages, Stretton Hall, Leicester Frith	20	14	8	8	23
North Lincolnshire					
Harmston Hall: including; Tuxford Hostel	7	14	11	33	27
South Lincolnshire					
Norton Lea	—	—	0	0	0
Fleet	3	4	5	13	16
St. Peter's	1	2	3	5	11
Central Nottinghamshire					
Ransom	0	2	6	11	3
Balderton	2	3	6	7	8
Barnsley					
Keresforth Centre	—	—	—	0	0
Doncaster					
St. Catherine's Doncaster	6	1	14	19	12
Sheffield					
Aughton Court	0	7	0	20	—
Grenoside Grange	7	10	3	10	10
Greenacres Hostel	1	2	2	2	2
Ryegate Centre	0	0	0	0	0
Commonside Hostel	3	0	3	1	5
Scott Road Hostel	5	4	3	0	1
St. Josephs	0	63	—	—	—
Hilltop Hostel	0	1	4	0	0
Mill Brook Hostel	1	1	0	3	3
Lightwood House	0	3	4	1	0
Arbourthorne Hostel	0	0	0	0	1
Rivermead MH Unit	—	—	2	2	1
Woodcliffe A Hostel	—	—	0	1	0
Woodcliffe B Hostel	—	—	—	—	2
EAST ANGLIA REGION					
Cambridge					
Ida Darwin	2	1	15	6	13
Gloucester Centre	0	0	0	—	—

Health authority and Hospital	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
West Suffolk					
Risbridge	0	1	13	2	2
East Suffolk					
Jane Walker	0	0	1	8	16
Norwich					
Hales: including; Eaton Grange	—	—	—	—	4
Little Plumstead: including; Blofield Hall	16	11	38	32	18
Great Yarmouth					
Lothingland	2	3	1	6	5
West Norfolk and Wisbech					
Windsor Unit West Norfolk and King's Lynn	—	—	—	4	4
NORTH WEST THAMES REGION					
North Bedfordshire					
Bromham	2	4	6	4	13
South Bedfordshire					
Appledore Community Unit	—	—	—	—	0
North West Hertfordshire					
Cell Barnes	3	10	10	10	16
Harperbury	17	19	20	19	10
South West Hertfordshire					
Leavesden	14	17	15	16	25
Brent					
Kingsbury: including; St. Andrews	0	2	6	6	9
Paddington and North Kensington					
MH Unit, 291 Harrow Road	—	0	0	0	0
NORTH EAST THAMES REGION					
Basildon and Thurrock					
South Ockendon: including; Dulvals Hostel, New Lodge	8	13	25	27	20
Mid Essex					
Bridge	2	2	0	2	1
North East Essex					
The Royal Eastern Counties: including; Handford House, Kingsmead, Turner Village, Hillsleigh, Essex Hall, Barker House, Lexdon House, Brunswick House, Crossley House	8	6	2	22	24
West Essex					
Great West Hatch	0	0	1	0	0
Barking, Havering and Brentwood					
Little Warley Lodge	0	0	7	15	19
City and Hackney					
St. Leonard's Penrose House	—	—	—	2	1
Malpass Community Centre	—	—	—	—	0
Newham					
MH Unit, Albert Dock	—	—	—	0	0
Waltham Forest					
Leytonstone House	7	13	13	3	5
SOUTH EAST THAMES REGION					
Eastbourne					
Loughton Lodge	1	6	6	12	1
Bedfordwell Road MH Unit	—	—	—	0	0
Hastings					
Hill House	1	5	6	1	4
Mount Pleasant	1	2	2	13	0
East Down House	3	4	0	12	4
South East Kent					
Eversley House	0	0	1	4	1
Canterbury and Thanet					
Highland Court	2	5	6	4	4
Eastry	3	4	22	8	29
Dartford and Gravesham					
Darenth Park	30	67	23	41	73
The Avenue	—	—	—	—	0
St. John's Road	—	—	—	—	0
Ridgeway Hostel	—	—	—	—	0
Maidstone					
Lenham	1	0	0	2	23
Tunbridge Wells					
Leybourne Grange	51	34	56	85	54
Princess Christian's	3	1	2	3	20
Lewisham and North Southwark					
Grove Park	7	0	2	3	2
SOUTH WEST THAMES REGION					
North West Surrey					
Botleys Park: including; Murray House	15	4	6	78	38

Health authority and Hospital	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Brook House	—	—	—	0	0
West Surrey and North East Hampshire					
Northfield	1	0	3	6	3
Greenfields	—	—	—	0	0
South West Surrey					
King George V	1	0	2	2	0
Royal Hostel Elstead	0	1	0	0	0
Mid Surrey					
The Manor, Epsom: including; Aldingbourne House, Queen Elizabeth	3	20	35	1	12
East Surrey					
Royal Earlswood: including; Farmfield, Earlswood Home	3	7	16	30	30
Chichester					
Barnfield House	—	—	—	1	0
Mid Downs					
Forest	5	1	5	4	8
Goddards Green	1	0	0	0	3
Croydon					
St. Lawrence's, Caterham: including; Woodhurst	18	17	10	18	75
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton					
Normansfield	13	3	6	3	3
Wandsworth					
Gardiner Hill Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Bell House	—	—	0	—	—
Merton and Sutton					
Osborne House	5	1	2	10	3
St. Ebba's	15	7	12	21	13
Southside Home	1	6	1	5	5
The Turret	0	1	1	5	10
Cedars Close	—	—	—	—	0
WESSEX REGION					
East Dorset					
Fairmile House	—	—	0	1	0
The Oaks, Bournemouth	—	0	0	0	0
Hillcrest	—	—	0	0	0
Castle Hill House	—	—	1	0	3
The Cedars	—	—	—	—	0
Ashmore House	—	—	—	—	0
West Dorset					
Coldharbour: including; Weymhill	0	0	13	3	0
Henchard House	—	—	—	0	2
LBHU Bridport	—	—	—	—	0
32 St. Andrews Road	—	—	—	—	0
Portsmouth					
Coldeast: including; Teekew House, Denmead Hostel, Braemar House, Sandy Point, 6 Underdown Avenue, Locksway House, The Lodge, The House	27	18	35	34	29
Mary Rose House	—	—	—	—	0
Kimpton House	—	—	—	—	0
South West Hampshire and Southampton					
Tatchbury Mount: including; Hillrise Hostel, White House, Hazelmere, Westwood House, Grove House, Oakfield House	10	18	21	22	24
Winchester					
Titchborne Down House	—	—	—	0	2
Berweeke House Hostel	—	—	—	0	1
Glendale	—	—	—	—	0
The Ridge	—	—	—	—	0
Compton House	—	—	—	0	0
Bishopstoke House	—	—	—	0	1
The Old Rectory	—	—	—	0	0
Weyhill Road MH Unit	—	—	—	0	0
Wolversdene Road MH Unit	—	—	—	0	0
Basingstoke and North Hampshire					
Sherborne House	—	—	4	10	—
Darlington House	—	—	1	5	0
Erdersley House	—	—	0	0	0
Salisbury					
Avondale Unit	—	—	—	0	0
Swindon					
The Lanterns	—	—	—	0	0
Burderop: including; North View	—	—	3	8	6
Pewsey	15	9	5	9	2
Bath					
Amberley Unit	—	—	—	0	0
Beaumonds	—	—	—	0	0
Draycott	—	—	—	0	0
Winsley Centre	0	0	2	0	2
Longford	1	0	4	0	3

Health authority and Hospital	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Plean Dene	—	—	0	0	0
OXFORD REGION					
East Berkshire					
Church Hill House	10	7	18	10	10
Binfield Park	0	3	3	2	3
Clarefield Court	1	4	3	2	2
West Berkshire					
Wayland House	5	4	3	2	3
Style Acre	1	5	2	0	0
Aylesbury Vale					
Manor House	5	7	2	6	21
Northampton					
Princess Marina	4	4	3	7	7
Oxfordshire					
Slade, Headington	—	—	—	—	0
Bradwell Grove	15	16	27	20	24
Cotshill	1	3	32	3	1
Cumnor Rise	9	4	2	1	0
Hollyrood House	—	—	—	0	0
SOUTH WESTERN REGION					
Bristol and Weston					
Farleigh	4	3	4	30	5
Yatton Hall	2	4	11	20	2
Frenchay					
Stoke Park: including; Clevedon Holiday Home, Hanham Hall Purdown, Leigh Court, Anchor Lodge Hostel	16	6	28	77	35
Southmead					
Hortham: including; Hillside House, Chasefield House, Mortimer House, Berwick Unit, Thornbury, The Knoll	7	12	27	65	27
Brentry	3	1	6	10	7
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly					
Elizabeth Barclay	1	5	2	3	7
The Retreat	4	10	0	4	9
West Heath House	0	0	0	0	3
Exeter					
Royal Western CTS Starcross: including; Franklyn, Micklewright Unit, Stoke Lyne, St. Mary's Axminster, Western, Dun Esk	57	26	149	83	30
Langdon	—	—	7	39	—
North Devon					
Kingsley	0	0	0	3	0
Plymouth					
Tamar House: including; Cumberland House	0	0	0	0	0
Torbay					
Steepway Hostel	0	0	0	0	0
Hawkmoor	—	—	0	0	0
Gloucester					
Gransmoor	0	0	0	1	1
Selsley Vicarage	0	0	0	0	0
Thirlstaine Court	0	0	0	0	0
The Buckholt	—	0	0	0	0
Hollybrook House	—	—	—	0	0
Windrush	—	—	—	0	0
St. Mary's Home Painswick	0	0	2	0	0
Twyver Unit	6	2	3	4	1
Somerset					
Sandhill Park	5	4	2	17	12
Norah Fry House	10	7	10	5	7
Selwood House	4	5	7	2	6
WEST MIDLAND REGION					
Bromsgrove and Redditch					
Cooper's Hill	—	—	—	—	0
Herefordshire					
Mill Pond Street	—	—	—	—	0
Kidderminster and District					
Lea	8	9	10	7	25
Lea Castle: including; Coombe House, Edge View Hostel, Woodfield House	13	23	32	17	25
Mytton Oak House	—	—	—	—	0
Mid Staffordshire					
Burton House	—	—	—	—	0
White Lodge	0	0	0	0	0
North Staffordshire					
Stallington: including; Bagnall	8	12	11	7	13
Arnold Grove	—	—	—	—	0
MHU Whitfield Avenue	—	—	—	—	0

Health authority and Hospital	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
South East Staffordshire					
Kingsley Comm. Unit	—	—	—	—	0
Rugby					
Admirals Court MH Unit	—	—	—	—	0
North Warwickshire					
Chelmsley	1	8	29	2	5
Coleshill Hall: including; Overwhite Acre House	7	5	13	8	17
Manor Court Road	—	—	—	—	0
South Warwickshire					
Weston	1	0	0	0	4
Abbeyfields	2	0	4	4	6
South Birmingham					
Monyhull	14	6	14	24	8
Coventry					
Roxsburgh House Coventry	—	—	—	0	0
Dudley					
Ridge Hill	0	0	3	2	3
Solihull					
Middlesfield: including; Ivy Lodge, Hertford House, Lyndon House	0	4	3	5	3
Walsall					
St. Margaret's, Birmingham: including; Daisy Bank Annexe	36	26	22	10	8
Wolverhampton					
Beeches Hospital	—	—	—	—	0
MERSEY REGION					
Chester					
The Manor, Wirral	0	2	3	0	1
Crewe					
Cranage Hall: including; Winsford and Crewe, C and C Unit, 7-9 Palmer Road	9	15	17	16	19
Halton					
Moorfield Road, Widnes	—	—	—	—	0
Macclesfield					
Mary Dendy	0	4	5	13	10
Warrington					
Newchurch	5	3	9	16	38
Liverpool Eastern Sector					
Olive Mount Childrens	—	—	—	5	6
Wirral					
Ashton House: including; Kent House	1	0	13	1	1
NORTH WESTERN REGION					
Lancaster					
Royal Albert	21	36	22	27	40
Blackburn Hyndburn and Ribble Valley					
Brockall	12	16	31	16	47
Eshton Terrace	—	—	0	0	0
Burnley Pendle and Rossendale					
Calderstones	8	18	13	29	33
Salford					
Swinton	5	1	0	2	0
Stockport					
Offerton House	4	6	5	1	4
SPECIAL HOSPITALS					
Rampton	113	—	—	—	—
Moss Side	45	—	—	—	—

Notes:
1. Mental-handicap hospitals are those containing beds for the treatment of mentally handicapped people only.
2. "—" denotes a hospital not operating exclusively as a mental handicap hospital in that year.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations seeking to change rules relating to organ transplants in order to enable relatives of deceased persons to authorise their use.

Mrs. Currie: No representations have been received. The Human Tissue Act 1961 already provides for the relatives of deceased persons to consent to the removal of organs for medical purposes.

Hospitals

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals there were in the United Kingdom in *(a)* June 1979 and *(b)* February 1986, respectively.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. In 1979 there were 2,023 National Health Service hospitals in England. The corresponding figure for 1985, the latest available, was 1,862. These figures are based on a count of separately administered hospitals which provide residential facilities during the year. Day

hospitals and clinics are therefore not included. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service hospitals of over 800 beds were built between *(a)* 1960 and 1970, *(b)* 1970 and 1980 and *(c)* since 1980.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally shows that hospital developments, often built in phases, culminating in provision of over 800 beds were completed as follows:

	Number
1960 to 1970	3
1971 to 1980	12
1981 to date	3

Overall, since 1981, 195 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been completed.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital beds there were in the United Kingdom in *(a)* June 1979 and *(b)* February 1986, respectively.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. For the latest information available for England I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) on 10 February, at columns *201-204*. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital bed places have been available during each year since 1974 in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(b)* Barnsley metropolitan council area.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. National Health Service hospital activity figures are collected centrally according to regional and district health authority area. The available figures are given in the table.

Average daily number of available beds in National Health Service hospitals

	Health authority		
	Yorkshire region	*Trent region*	*Barnsley district*
1974	32,117	32,307	849
1975	31,714	32,175	865
1976	31,246	32,292	886
1977	30,890	32,187	946
1978	30,539	32,122	961
1979	29,946	31,712	962
1980	29,298	31,516	1,013
1981	28,959	30,944	1,014
1982	28,488	30,744	971
1983	28,034	30,481	1,032
1984	27,470	30,000	1,073
1985	26,793	29,391	1,134

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* geriatric, *(b)* surgical and *(c)* specialist beds are available in the Bath district health authority in July of each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The available information is given in the table. Between 1979 and 1985 the number of in-patient cases treated in Bath DHA increased by 14·1 per cent. from 43,048 to 49,135.

Average daily number of available beds, Bath District Health Authority[1]

Sector	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Geriatric	694·5	685·1	681·7	673·9	638·8	628·5	624·0
Medical acute	369·4	377·4	374·3	363·7	350·0	330·4	351·0
Surgical acute	519·7	523·4	516·1	518·0	490·0	469·6	449·8
Other acute[2]	359·6	354·2	354·9	357·8	357·2	355·9	355·8
Mental handicap	99·3	113·7	107·4	97·7	89·2	73·4	78·1
Mental illness	804·0	782·7	767·2	763·1	750·5	719·9	664·3
Maternity	181·0	176·8	156·5	159·0	152·3	148·9	147·8
Others[3]	16·0	15·5	16·0	13·6	10·0	10·0	10·0
TOTAL	3,043·5	3,028·8	2,974·1	2,946·8	2,838·0	2,736·6	2,680·8

[1] Bath health district prior to 1982.
[2] Special care baby units, GP and other and GP dental.
[3] Units for the younger disabled and staff wards.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received concerning the proposal of Bath district health authority to reduce bed numbers in Chippenham and Melksham hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: We have received 330 representations from members of the public, about possible changes to services at Frogwell hospital, Chippenham and at Melksham, Bradford on Avon and Malmesbury hospitals connected with the Bath district health authority's 1987-88 £1·3 million service development programme.

No decision has yet been taken by the health authority. If any of the proposals involve reduction or significant changes of use of hospital beds, the proposals would, of course, be subject to the usual formal consultation procedure.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district health authority in

England in 1985 *(a)* the total number of beds in non-psychiatric National Health Service hospitals, *(b)* the total number of beds in private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Nursing Homes Act 1984 and *(c)* the number of beds in private institutions expressed as a percentage of the number of non-psychiatric hospital beds.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *409*]: The information requested is as follows:

Number of non-psychiatric beds in National Health Service hospitals, number of beds in private institutions registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984 and the latter expressed as a percentage of the former. 1985

Regional and District Health Authorities	*Average daily number of available non-psychiatric beds*	*Total beds in private institutions[1] at 31 December*	*Beds in private institutions as a percentage of those non-psychiatric beds in NHS hospitals*
Northern Regional Health Authority			
Hartlepool	546·0	45	8·2
North Tees	749·4	44	5·9
South Tees	1,554·2	123	7·9
East Cumbria	825·5	98	11·9
South Cumbria	761·1	172	22·6
West Cumbria	595·4	30	5·0
Darlington	681·1	322	47·3
Durham	734·4	35	4·8
North West Durham	566·3	0	0·0
South West Durham	563·2	20	3·6
Northumberland	1,078·8	68	6·3
Gateshead	782·2	40	5·1
Newcastle	2,706·6	118	4·4
North Tyneside	725·3	0	0·0
South Tyneside	599·4	0	0·0
Sunderland	1,618·8	0	0·0
RHA Total	15,087·7	1,115	7·4
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority			
Hull	1,390·0	129	9·3
East Yorkshire	1,001·8	75	7·5
Grimsby	776·2	60	7·7
Scunthorpe	755·9	72	9·5
Northallerton	367·9	161	43·8
York	1,146·6	438	38·2
Scarborough	623·3	306	49·1
Harrogate	817·3	807	98·7
Bradford	1,870·7	252	13·5
Airedale	767·9	462	60·2
Calderdale	904·9	272	30·1
Huddersfield	948·6	69	7·3
Dewsbury	735·9	28	3·8
Leeds Western	1,989·5	202	10·2
Leeds Eastern	1,890·9	391	20·7
Wakefield	857·3	25	2·9
Pontefract	802·4	0	0·0
RHA Total	17,647·1	3,749	21·2
Trent Regional Health Authority			
North Derbyshire	1,074·9	110	10·2
South Derbyshire	1,874·6	374	20·0
Leicestershire	3,072·6	599	19·5
North Lincolnshire	1,158·8	642	55·4
South Lincolnshire	1,105·4	158	14·3
Bassetlaw	391·1	23	5·9
Central Nottinghamshire	1,262·4	166	13·1
Nottingham	2,619·43	857	32·7
Barnsley	878·8	0	0·0
Doncaster	1,240·7	144	11·6
Rotherham	911·8	38	4·2
Sheffield	3,164·3	326	10·3
RHA Total	18,754·7	3,437	18·3
East Anglian Regional Health Authority			
Cambridge	1,172·9	234	20·0
Peterborough	960·2	85	8·9
West Suffolk	945·1	174	18·4
East Suffolk	1,493·6	203	13·6
Norwich	1,961·9	392	20·0

Regional and District Health Authorities	Average daily number of available non-psychiatric beds	Total beds in private institutions[1] at 31 December	Beds in private institutions as a percentage of those non-psychiatric beds in NHS hospitals
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	751·0	49	6·5
West Norfolk and Wisbech	689·2	115	16·7
Huntingdon	408·2	54	13·2
RHA Total	8,382·1	1,306	15·6
North West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North Bedfordshire	787·5	177	22·5
South Bedfordshire	766·6	22	2·9
North Hertfordshire	766·9	188	24·5
East Hertfordshire	637·9	174	27·3
North West Hertfordshire	791·4	131	16·6
South West Hertfordshire	790·6	153	19·4
Barnet	1,494·5	361	24·2
Harrow	819·1	122	14·9
Hillingdon	1,324·2	135	10·2
Hounslow and Spelthorne	1,227·4	136	11·1
Ealing	594·6	292	49·1
Brent	811·0	66	8·1
Paddington and North Kensington	1,119·8	42	3·8
Riverside	1,716·5	713	41·5
RHA Total	13,648·0	2,712	19·9
North East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Basildon and Thurrock	1,123·2	0	0·0
Mid Essex	1,149·2	182	15·8
North East Essex	1,090·6	325	29·8
West Essex	984·8	163	16·6
Southend	1,097·2	322	29·3
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,893·2	215	11·4
Hampstead	929·2	241	25·9
Bloomsbury	1,947·7	1,175	60·3
Islington	826·6	30	3·6
City and Hackney	1,514·3	108	7·1
Newham	864·8	0	0·0
Tower Hamlets	1,186·1	14	1·2
Enfield	877.6	157	17·9
Haringey	918·4	185	20·1
Redbridge	826·7	120	14·5
Waltham Forest	1,258·8	0	0·0
RHA Total	18,488·4	3,237	17·5
South East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Brighton	1,450·2	1,352	93·2
Eastbourne	810·6	1,134	139·9
Hastings	758·6	965	127·2
South East Kent	985·9	454	46·0
Canterbury and Thanet	1,346·9	583	43·3
Dartford and Gravesham	890·0	76	8·5
Maidstone	640·7	256	40·0
Medway	954·3	65	6·8
Tunbridge Wells	1,100·5	739	67·2
Bexley	570·1	100	17·5
Greenwich	1,391·9	40	2·9
Bromley	1,027·8	501	48·7
West Lambeth	1,067·3	64	6·0
Camberwell	1,166·6	19	1·6
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,703·2	250	14·7
RHA Total	15,864·6	6,598	41·6
South West Thames Regional Health Authority			
North West Surrey	778·1	312	40·1
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	737·3	342	46·4
South West Surrey	757·1	717	94·7
Mid Surrey	659·4	399	60·5
East Surrey	735·8	504	68·5
Chichester	613·8	591	96·3
Mid Downs	832·5	594	71·4

Regional and District Health Authorities	Average daily number of available non-psychiatric beds	Total beds in private institutions[1] at 31 December	Beds in private institutions as a percentage of those non-psychiatric beds in NHS hospitals
Worthing	916·7	995	108·5
Croydon	1,002·4	561	56·0
Kingston and Esher	694·6	187	26·9
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	663·2	458	69·1
Wandsworth	1,290·3	302	23·4
Merton and Sutton	1,171·9	561	47·9
RHA Total	10,853·1	6,523	60·1
Wessex Regional Health Authority			
East Dorset	1,909·0	1,584	83·0
West Dorset	792·7	181	22·8
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	1,800·4	652	36·2
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1,883·0	444	23·6
Winchester	704·1	319	45·3
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	762·1	120	15·7
Salisbury	731·5	266	36·4
Swindon	869·8	124	14·3
Bath	1,938·4	506	26·1
Isle of Wight	501·4	162	32·3
RHA Total	11,892·4	4,358	36·6
Oxford Regional Health Authority			
East Berkshire	1,147·6	587	51·2
West Berkshire	1,417·6	304	21·4
Aylesbury Vale	797·1	171	21·5
Wycombe	702·3	299	42·6
Milton Keynes	413·2	114	27·6
Kettering	806·1	12	1·5
Northampton	1,174·2	642	54·7
Oxfordshire	2,173·6	589	27·1
RHA Total	8,631·7	2,718	31·5
South Western Regional Health Authority			
Bristol and Weston	1,484·0	1,043	70·3
Frenchay	1,038·8	117	11·3
Southmead	900·2	460	51·1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	1,398·0	680	48·6
Exeter	1,484·3	591	39·8
North Devon	587·6	286	48·7
Plymouth	1,725·9	777	45·0
Torbay	1,025·5	659	64·3
Cheltenham	929·0	336	36·2
Gloucester	1,341·5	309	23·0
Somerset	1,688·6	416	24·6
RHA Total	13,603·4	5,674	41·7
West Midlands Regional Health Authority			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	487·5	86	17·6
Herefordshire	663·0	161	24·3
Kidderminster and District	383·0	130	33·9
Worcester and District	956·2	638	66·7
Shropshire	1,962·3	134	6·8
Mid Staffordshire	744·2	294	39·5
North Staffordshire	2,031·0	145	7·1
South East Staffordshire	630·8	144	22·8
Rugby	314·8	28	8·9
North Warwickshire	454·9	113	24·8
South Warwickshire	950·8	472	49·6
Central Birmingham	1,579·6	270	17·1
East Birmingham	960·5	106	11·0
North Birmingham	961·4	188	19·6
South Birmingham	1,458·6	109	7·5
West Birmingham	1,449·5	53	3·7
Coventry	1,553·9	22	1·4
Dudley	1,223·2	21	1·7
Sandwell	869·3	51	5·9
Solihull	427·5	84	19·6
Walsall	782·9	41	5·2

Regional and District Health Authorities	Average daily number of available non-psychiatric beds	Total beds in private institutions[1] at 31 December	Beds in private institutions as a percentage of those non-psychiatric beds in NHS hospitals
Wolverhampton	1,271·1	153	12·0
RHA Total	22,116·0	3,443	15·6
Mersey Regional Health Authority			
Chester	836·0	146	17·5
Crewe	931·8	100	10·7
Halton	238·5	0	0·0
Macclesfield	600·9	359	59·7
Warrington	740·1	8	1·1
Liverpool	2,869·9	365	12·7
St. Helens and Knowsley	1,041·2	226	21·7
Southport and Formby	638·3	733	114·8
South Sefton	1,547·0	226	14·6
Wirral	1,630·8	838	51·4
RHA Total	11,094·5	3,001	27·0
North Western Regional Health Authority			
Lancaster	681·9	108	15·8
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	1,433·0	506	35·3
Preston	1,042·1	80	7·7
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	1,184·3	147	12·4
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	1,064·9	108	10·1
West Lancashire	672·1	182·7	2·7
Chorley and South Ribble	282·5	321	113·6
Bolton	1,010·9	134	13·3
Bury	680·6	105	15·4
North Manchester	1,360·1	51	3·7
Central Manchester	1,212·3	0	0·0
South Manchester	2,044·1	214	10·5
Oldham	808·5	8	1·0
Rochdale	680·9	203	29·8
Salford	1,360·1	78	5·7
Stockport	1,322·8	821	62·1
Tameside and Glossop	776·8	0	0·0
Trafford	640·4	188	29·4
Wigan	1,118·7	24	2·1
RHA Total	19,377·0	3,114	16·1

[1] Includes beds intended for use by mental illness and mental handicap patients.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district health authority in England in 1985 *(a)* the total number of beds per 100,000 population in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984, *(b)* the total number of beds for care of the elderly (those over 65 years requiring long-stay nursing care) in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984 and *(c)* the number of beds for the care of the elderly per 100,000 population aged over 65 years in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *409*]: The information requested is as follows:

Total number of beds and rates per 100,000 population and number of beds intended for use by elderly patients (patients aged 65 and over requiring long stay nursing care) and rate per 100,000 population age 65 and over in institutions registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984. Position as 31 December 1985.

Region and District Health Authorities	All institutions		Elderly (long stay)	
	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1]	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1] aged over 65 years
Northern Regional Health Authority				
Hartlepool	45	49·1	45	362·9
North Tees	44	25·0	8	40·4
South Tees	123	42·1	80	221·0
East Cumbria	98	55·5	46	158·1
South Cumbria	172	100·3	0	0·0
West Cumbria	30	22·0	0	0·0
Darlington	322	239·5	262	1,323·2
Durham	35	14·8	35	107·4
North West Durham	0	0·0	0	0·0
South West Durham	20	13·0	0	0·0
Northumberland	68	22·6	5	10·6

Region and District Health Authorities	All institutions		Elderly (long stay)	
	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1]	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1] aged over 65 years
Gateshead	40	19·2	25	78·6
Newcastle	118	41·8	0	0·0
North Tyneside	0	0·0	0	0·0
South Tyneside	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sunderland	0	0·0	0	0·0
RHA Total	1,115	36·1	506	110·9
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority				
Hull	129	41·6	93	203·1
East Yorkshire	75	40·2	47	146·0
Grimsby	60	37·6	26	112·1
Scunthorpe	72	37·2	34	130·3
Northallerton	161	143·0	46	289·3
York	438	168·9	215	554·1
Scarborough	306	214·6	248	829·4
Harrogate	807	602·7	764	3,279·0
Bradford	252	74·4	252	547·8
Airedale	462	267·2	217	740·6
Calderdale	272	141·9	179	575·6
Huddersfield	69	32·5	37	113·1
Dewsbury	28	17·0	0	0·0
Leeds Western	202	56·1	99	171·9
Leeds Eastern	391	111·6	216	410·6
Wakefield	25	17·6	25	131·6
Pontefract	0	0·0	0	0·0
RHA Total	3,749	104·2	2,498	455·0
North East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Basildon and Thurrock	0	0·0	0	0·0
Mid Essex	182	64·1	182	495·9
North East Essex	325	110·2	220	382·6
West Essex	163	63·9	152	440·6
Southend	322	100·9	314	559·7
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	215	46·9	45	65·2
Hampstead	241	224·6	26	153·8
Bloomsbury	1,175	905·9	15	67·9
Islington	30	17·9	30	126·1
City and Hackney	108	56·1	108	407·5
Newham	0	0·0	0	0·0
Tower Hamlets	14	9·5	0	0·0
Enfield	157	59·2	122	291·2
Haringey	185	93·8	160	599·3
Redbridge	120	52·6	118	316·4
Waltham Forest	0	0·0	0	0·0
RHA Total	3,237	86·3	1,492	264·2
South East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Brighton	1,352	455·2	596	931·3
Eastbourne	1,134	507·2	1,015	1,806·0
Hastings	965	596·4	936	2,223·3
South East Kent	454	173·5	417	885·4
Canterbury and Thanet	583	194·6	583	919·6
Dartford and Gravesham	76	34·3	36	129·0
Maidstone	256	131·9	123	478·6
Medway	65	20·2	65	163·7
Tunbridge Wells	739	376·7	361	1,090·6
Bexley	100	45·8	100	320·5
Greenwich	40	18·5	40	125·8
Bromley	501	168·2	250	525·2
West Lambeth	64	39·4	0	0·0
Camberwell	19	9·0	0	0·0
Lewisham and North Southwark	250	78·8	121	234·5
RHA Total	6,598	183·2	4,643	734·6
South West Thames Regional Health Authority				
North West Surrey	312	149·9	238	785·3
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	342	123·5	280	982·2
South West Surrey	717	390·7	410	1,366·7
Mid Surrey	399	239·4	276	932·4
East Surrey	504	270·8	247	817·9

Region and District Health Authorities	All institutions		Elderly (long stay)	
	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1]	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1] aged over 65 years
Chichester	591	336·4	578	1,420·1
Mid Downs	594	218·5	594	1,609·8
Worthing	995	414·4	846	1,317·8
Croydon	561	175·9	556	1,284·1
Kingston and Esher	187	104·2	108	343·9
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	458	199·2	162	400·0
Wandsworth	302	158·6	302	1,078·6
Merton and Sutton	561	167·9	279	500·9
RHA Total	6,523	220·2	4,876	993·7
Wessex Regional Health Authority				
East Dorset	1,584	364·3	1,429	1,443·4
West Dorset	181	93·8	134	345·4
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	652	124·4	597	780·4
Southampton and South West Hampshire	644	107·2	320	470·6
Winchester	319	153·2	245	836·2
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	120	56·0	33	134·7
Salisbury	266	217·9	107	509·5
Swindon	124	55·2	84	292·7
Bath	506	127·8	410	640·6
Isle of Wight	162	131·8	0	0·0
RHA Total	4,358	152·7	3,359	703·5
Oxford Regional Health Authority				
East Berkshire	587	163·1	408	916·9
West Berkshire	304	69·6	190	362·6
Aylesbury Vale	171	122·7	140	864·2
Wycombe	299	109·9	175	495·8
Milton Keynes	114	74·4	20	148·1
Kettering	12	4·8	12	33·1
Northampton	642	216·7	285	712·5
Oxfordshire	589	111·1	514	757·0
RHA Total	2,718	111·5	1,744	569·7
South Western Regional Health Authority				
Bristol and Weston	1,043	287·5	897	1,517·8
Frenchay	117	53·5	117	367·9
Southmead	400	199·2	403	1,141·6
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	680	153·2	358	673·9
Exeter	591	196·4	12	19·2
North Devon	286	220·2	286	1,157·9
Plymouth	777	239·2	640	1,267·3
Torbay	659	283·6	553	985·7
Cheltenham	336	162·4	306	854·7
Gloucester	309	101·5	279	605·2
Somerset	416	105·4	354	500·0
RHA Total	5,674	180·1	4,405	793·0
West Midlands Regional Health Authority				
Bromsgrove and Redditch	86	52·9	61	338·9
Hereford&shire	161	105·4	90	347·5
Kidderminster and District	130	128·6	120	845·1
Worcester and District	638	272·3	525	1,454·3
Shropshire	134	34·3	92	164·6
Mid Staffordshire	294	96·0	228	629·8
North Staffordshire	143	31·3	28	40·3
South East Staffordshire	144	57·3	59	206·3
Rugby	28	32·7	28	243·5
North Warwickshire	113	65·4	55	253·5
South Warwickshire	472	213·2	257	788·3
Central Birmingham	270	150·1	12	45·3
East Birmingham	186	52·6	100	322·6
North Birmingham	188	115·1	134	572·6
South Birmingham	109	43·8	95	254·0
West Birmingham	53	24·8	42	145·8
Coventry	22	7·0	0	0·0
Dudley	21	7·0	0	0·0
Sandwell	51	16·8	51	111·6
Solihull	84	41·6	16	64·3
Walsall	41	15·6	41	119·9

Region and District Health Authorities	All institutions: Number of beds	All institutions: Number of beds per 100,000 population[1]	Elderly (long stay): Number of beds	Elderly (long stay): Number of beds per 100,000 population[1] aged over 65 years
Wolverhampton	153	60·4	85	232·2
RHA Total	3,443	66·4	2,119	292·5
Mersey Regional Health Authority				
Chester	146	82·1	106	427·4
Crewe	100	40·7	100	290·7
Halton	0	0·0	0	0·0
Macclesfield	359	201·2	335	1,278·6
Warrington	8	4·5	8	35·1
Liverpool	365	74·3	277	357·4
St. Helens and Knowsley	226	63·7	10	23·0
Southport and Formby	733	621·2	673	2,977·9
South Sefton	226	125·3	136	531·3
Wirral	838	235·8	664	1,162·9
RHA Total	3,001	123·8	2,309	657·5
North Western Regional Health Authority				
Lancaster	108	84·0	48	191·2
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	506	159·5	260	383·5
Preston	80	64·3	80	398·0
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	147	54·0	139	337·4
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	108	46·9	87	238·4
West Lancashire	18	16·7	0	0·0
Chorley and South Ribble	321	166·6	54	224·1
Bolton	134	51·3	89	237·3
Bury	105	60·6	80	312·5
North Manchester	51	34·7	51	215·2
Central Manchester	0	0·0	0	0·0
South Manchester	214	120·0	121	424·6
Oldham	8	3·6	8	24·9
Rochdale	203	95·0	136	465·8
Salford	78	32·5	56	145·5
Stockport	821	281·9	397	938·5
Tameside and Glossop	0	0·0	0	0·0
Trafford	188	86·3	180	548·8
Wigan	24	7·8	4	9·8
RHA Total	3,114	78·0	1,790	292·4
Trent Regional Health Authority				
North Derbyshire	110	30·5	110	196·1
Southern Derbyshire	374	71·6	319	403·8
Leicestershire	599	68·7	0	0·0
North Lincolnshire	642	241·6	603	1,474·3
South Lincolnshire	158	53·6	157	320·4
Bassetlaw	23	22·1	0	0·0
Central Nottinghamshire	166	58·2	150	374·1
Nottingham	857	139·0	724	814·4
Barnsley	0	0·0	0	0·0
Doncaster	144	49·9	96	247·4
Rotherham	38	15·0	21	63·4
Sheffield	326	60·5	140	153·2
RHA Total	3,437	74·3	2,320	339·0
East Anglia Regional Health Authority				
Cambridge	234	87·1	33	82·5
Peterborough	85	43·2	0	0·0
West Suffolk	174	77·4	61	190·0
East Suffolk	203	64·4	139	262·8
Norwich	392	85·1	253	302·3
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	49	25·5	43	122·5
West Norfolk and Wisbech	115	63·4	0	0·0
Huntingdon	54	43·0	29	221·4
RHA Total	1,306	66·5	558	177·5
North West Thames Regional Health Authority				
North Bedfordshire	177	73·1	97	323·3
South Bedfordshire	22	8·0	22	71·0
North Hertfordshire	188	100·8	94	401·7
East Hertfordshire	174	59·4	35	93·1

Region and District Health Authorities	All institutions		Elderly (long stay)	
	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1]	Number of beds	Number of beds per 100,000 population[1] aged over 65 years
North West Hertfordshire	131	50·1	45	128·9
South West Hertfordshire	153	62·4	91	249·3
Barnet	361	119·9	115	238·1
Harrow	122	60·5	0	0·0
Hillingdon	135	58·2	17	49·6
Hounslow and Spelthorne	136	47·6	130	318·6
Ealing	292	99·9	188	471·2
Brent	66	25·9	28	82·4
Paddington and North Kensington	42	34·3	7	42·9
Riverside	713	247·2	381	865·9
RHA Total	2,712	77·9	1,250	258·8

[1] Mid-1985 estimates.
Source: OPCS.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will refer to his advisory committee the findings relating to cough medicines and benzodiazepines in the "Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin" published on 23 March dealing with the limited list of drugs available under the National Health Service, a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. Newton: Yes. I have arranged for all members of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs to receive a copy of the bulletin.

Nurses

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses entered and left the nursing profession in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* the West Midlands regional health authority and *(c)* Walsall in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

I regret that information of this nature for England is not collected centrally. However, we are aware of work undertaken by the Institute of Manpower Studies which suggests that about 10 per cent. of qualified nurses and midwives leave the National Health Service each year. This figure includes retirements and those leaving for non-National Health Service nursing employment. They are not therefore all lost to the profession. On that basis, an estimated 23,500 in whole-time equivalent terms left the National Health Service in England in 1985-86.

After allowing for wastage and failure to practise on qualification, around 22,500 learners completed training and entered the National Health Service in the year to 31 March 1986. It is estimated that about 7,000 qualified staff in whole-time equivalent terms returned to the National Health Service in that year. This estimated excess of joiners over leavers compares closely with the actual increase in the number of qualified staff from 1984 to 1985 of 6,400 whole-time equivalents.

No information is available on the number of qualified nurses and midwives entering and leaving the nursing profession in West Midlands regional health authority and Walsall and it would not necessarily be correct to estimate the numbers on the same basis as for England as a whole.

Blood Donors

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, further to his answer of Monday 6 April, *Official Report*, column *107*, if he will indicate when this policy on restricting blood donors was implemented; and if he will estimate the anticipated reduction in the number of blood donors.

Mr. Newton: The National Blood Transfusion Service has maintained for at least 25 years the policy of deferring potential donors following their return to the United Kingdom from certain tropical areas.

Additionally, since September 1986 potential donors have been asked not to give blood if they have visited certain parts of Africa and have had sex with men or women living there.

These restrictions affect only a minute proportion of potential donors and have not resulted in any identifiable reduction in donor numbers.

NHS Property (Norwich)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all National Health Service property within the Norwich health authority district stating acreage and value in each case and also giving the overall acreage and value.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a list of the property held by the Norwich health authority as soon as possible. Up-to-date information about the values of National Health Service property is not held centrally.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Oldham, West constituency claimed maternity grant in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested.

The Oldham, West constituency is covered by the Departments local offices at Oldham and Failsworth, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of maternity grant claims received at these two offices during the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Oldham	1,021
Failsworth	1,349

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the sending of incorrect instructions about the last date to qualify for a single payment for maternity needs to local offices; whether correcting instructions had been received in all offices by the week before the deadline for claims of 6 April; if he will make transitional arrangements so that those eligible for payment for a baby born on or before 17 May can claim up to 17 May; and if he will mount an immediate national advertising campaign to publicise these arrangements.

Mr. Major: We have received one letter concerning the instructions relating to the transitional arrangements for the payment of supplementary benefit single payments for maternity needs which were issued to local offices in late January this year. Prior to receipt of this letter, as a result of a telephone enquiry received by the Department, it had already been decided to issue clarifying guidance to all local offices about applications for payments for maternity needs received before 6 April where the week of expected confinement was after that date. This was done on 5 March 1987 and we do not propose to take any further action.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether women on supplementary benefit and without savings of over £500 can claim a single payment for maternity needs for a baby due on or before 17 May, provided their claim was made before 6 April.

Mr. Major: A supplementary benefit single payment for maternity needs can be made, subject to the normal eligibility conditions, for a claim made before 6 April 1987 provided that, at the time of the claim, the expected week of confinement was not more than six weeks ahead.

Benefit Claims (Legality)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he, or anyone in his Department, has communicated details or findings of any inquiry from his Department relating to the legality of any claim for social security raised by an hon. Member to a person or persons not authorised to receive such information.

Mr. Lyell: I am not aware of any such breach of the Department's rules of confidentiality. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he will write to me and I shall look into it.

AIDS

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria were used in deciding not to place advertising for the "Danger of Aids" campaign in the Lancashire *Evening Telegraph;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The criterion used in the selection of media is that of cost-effective cover of the target audiences.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply,* 30 March 1987, c. *407*]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply,* 30 March 1987, c. *407*]: AIDS and HIV infection are not notifiable diseases and there is no obligation on staff to disclose their infection. Such information as any Department may have is therefore inevitably incomplete and is anyway subject to the normal rules of medical confidentiality.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply,* 30 March 1987, c. *407*]: In April 1986 the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the Government's chief medical officer, circulated all Departments with guidance to managers and model notes for staff. This Department drew on those notes and in June 1986 provided guidance for staff. I understand that copies of the MPO guidance are available in the Library. In addition, members of staff will have received copies of the Department's leaflet distributed to all households in the United Kingdom in January 1987.

Benefits

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people there are in Wales in receipt of, respectively *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* supplementary pension and *(c)* family income supplement.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available information is as follows:

Benefit	*Date*	*Number*
(a) Supplementary allowance	February 1986	198,000 claimants
(b) Supplementary pension	February 1986	92,000 claimants
(c) Family income supplement	May 1986	13,000 families

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost in benefits in a full year of unemployed school leavers between the ages of 16 and 18; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply,* 3 April 1987, c. *656*]: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Based on the number of unemployed claimants aged 16 and 17, and the average weekly payment of supplementary benefit to them on a particular day in December 1984, the annual expenditure was £176 million. This figure cannot be regarded as an accurate estimate of the total expenditure on supplementary benefit to this group of claimants because *(a)* it takes no account of the seasonal variations in the numbers in this group which are likely to arise particularly because of the patterns in school leaving; *(b)* it does not include occasional payments such as single payments for exceptional needs.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will express *(a)* the basic pension and *(b)* the single person's supplementary benefit level if unemployed as a percentage of average earnings in (i) 1957 (ii) 1979 (iii) 1987.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 April 1987, c. *412-13*]: The table gives the basic pension for a single person and a married couple and the ordinary supplementary benefit scale rate for a single householder as a percentage of average net earnings of single and married male manual workers, as appropriate. Benefit assistance for a householder on the ordinary rate of supplementary benefit would also include the meeting of housing costs. Pensioners reliant on the basic pension or little more would also be likely to be eligible for help from supplementary benefit or housing benefit. These figures therefore understate the extent to which social security benefit help replaces earnings.

Rates of benefit expressed as a percentage of average net earnings[1]

	Basic retirement pension		*Supplementary benefit—*
	Single	*Married*	*Single householder*
January 1985[2]	23·9	36·0	21·5
November 1979	31·8	48·4	25·0
1987-88[3]	29·1	44·3	22·4

[1] Average gross earnings of male manual workers less tax and national insurance contributions at the not contracted-out rate.

[2] Comparisons are normally made with benefit rates at uprating dates. No uprating took place in 1957.

[3] Benefit rates at April 1987. Earnings information for April not yet available and figures therefore based on estimated average financial year date. This is likely to be higher than actual average earnings at April.

Dental Health (Survey)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the latest practical time by which he can announce arrangements for the adult dental health survey due to be held in 1988 as a follow-up to those surveys held in 1978 an 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) on 19 December 1986, at columns *785-86*.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many individual persons in Wales received payments of severe weather allowance this winter; and if all these persons received this payment for two weeks.

Mr. Major: The latest available figures show that approximately 127,000 £5 payments had been made in Wales by 17 March. Separate figures on the number of individuals receiving payments are not available, but the great majority of successful claimants in Wales will have received a total of £10 in respect of the two weeks for which this help was made available.

Disabled Young People

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on 16-year-old disabled young people who are still at school obtaining an assessment under section 4 of the Disabled Persons (Representation, Consultation and Services) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Section 4 of the Disabled Person (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 came into force on 1 April 1987. It makes it clear that a local authority has a duty to decide whether a disabled person's needs call for the provision of any services in accordance with section 2(1) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, if requested to do so by the disabled person or by any person, for example a parent, who provides care for him or her in the circumstances mentioned in section 8 of the Act. This provision would apply to requests made by 16-year-old disabled young people who are still at school or by their carers.

Blood Products

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 7 April, *Official Report*, column *207*, on blood products, he will give the date in 1984 on which manufacturers of factor VIII initially found that heat treatment techniques inactivated HIV; if he will give details of the operation of the named patient basis used for prescription of heat-treated factor VIII; and from what date in 1984 heat-treated factor VIII could be so prescribed.

Mr. Newton: The first account of experimental work which showed that HIV in factor VIII could be inactivated by heat treatment was published in October 1984 (*Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 1984, Volume 33, 589-91). This work led to the National Haemophilia Society of the United States of America advising that heat treated factor VIII should be considered for haemophiliacs even though its protection against AIDS remained to be proven.

Similar advice was published in the United Kingdom in December 1984 (*Lancet* 1984, Vol. 2, 1433-1435).

However, not until February 1985 (*Lancet* 1985, Vol 1 271-272) was evidence published which showed that heat treatment of factor VIII actually reduced transmission of HIV to haemophiliacs.

Factor VIII products which had been heat treated to prevent the transmission of hepatitis were under development by several manufacturers throughout 1984 but with limited availability. The realisation that heat treatment procedures could also inactivate HIV led to the wider availability of these factor VIII products after October 1984.

The "named patient basis" refers to section 9 of the Medicines Act 1968. This exempts a doctor from the licensing provisions of the Act in respect of a medicinal product which is specifically prepared or imported by him for administration to a particular patient of his. There is no statutory requirement to notify the licensing authority about named patient prescribing, although practitioners are encouraged to do so. It is not therefore possible to give a precise first use date for such products.

Departmental Offices (Smoking)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what negotiations have taken place with trade unions about smoking in the Department of Health and Social Security offices;

(2) what protection from tobacco smoke is offered to Department of Health and Social Security employees;

(3) what is his Department's policy with regard to smoking in Department of Health and Social Security offices by *(a)* the general public and *(b)* Department of Health and Social Security employees.

Mr. Lyell: It has been the Department's policy, since 1979, to discourage the general public from smoking within its offices by the use of suitable signs and posters. Staff are generally allowed to smoke at their place of work, but must not do so whilst attending to members of the public, nor in areas of high fire risk. Staff are also asked not to smoke in lifts and corridors. For the protection of staff from tobacco smoke, local management throughout the Department have been encouraged to liaise with their trade unions with the aim of prohibiting, or limiting, smoking in staff restaurants and discouraging smoking at conferences and meetings.

In view of the growing concern about the hazards of tobacco smoking, management and the Departmental trade union side have agreed to form a joint working party to review the policy on smoking. Work on this review has already begun.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the waiting list for *(a)* urgent and *(b)* non-urgent hospital admissions for the Bath district health authority for (i) March 1987, (ii) September 1986, (iii) March 1986, (iv) September 1985 and (v) March 1985.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. For information from March 1985 to September 1986 I refer the hon. Member to the hospital in-patient waiting list summary booklets, copies of which have been placed in the Library. For more recent information he may wish to write to the chairman of the Bath district health authority.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many kidney transplants have been performed each year since 1979; and what was the waiting list for each of these years.

Mrs. Currie: According to information provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Service the number of cadaveric kidney transplant operations performed, and the numbers on the waiting list at 31 December during each of the years from 1979, were as follows:

	Transplants performed	*Waiting list at 31 December*
1979	842	1,450
1980	988	1,734
1981	905	2,076
1982	1,033	2,250
1983	1,144	2,485
1984	1,433	2,533
1985	1,336	3,215
1986	[1]1,493	3,224

[1] Notified to date. Late notifications may necessitate minor revisions.

The waiting list has continued to grow as increasing numbers of patients can be treated by transplant. We are concerned to see an expansion in the transplant programme, but this can be achieved only if more donor organs are made available.

Pensioners

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been for a worker on average earnings retiring in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* 1987 (i) the level of the retirement pension, (ii) average occupational pension, (iii) the state earnings-related pension scheme pension, where applicable, (iv) average investment income for a worker on average earnings.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Authority (Private Patient Income)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the financial year 1985-86 the health authorities for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 9 March 1987, c. *73*]: The statutory audit reports for the financial year 1985-86 included comments on the control over private patient income or debt collection procedures in the following health authorities:

Bloomsbury
City and Hackney
North Hertfordshire
Riverside
Southampton and South West Hampshire

Families (Benefits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of families on family income supplement and the number with children, *(b)* the number of one-parent families drawing the special allowance, *(c)* the number of families on unemployment benefit drawing social security and the number with children, *(d)* the number of other families on social security and the number with children, *(e)* the number of families paid other kinds of dependency addition and *(f)* the number of children covered by each of the foregoing categories.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *257*]: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Benefit recipients, those with children, and children in recipient families
Great Britain (thousands)
Table 1

Benefit[1]	*Recipients*[2]	*Recipients with children*	*Dependent children*	*Date*
Family income supplement	202	202	418	May 1986
One parent benefit	625	625	936	March 1987
Unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit	200	100	200	December 1984
Supplementary benefit only	[3]4,410	930	[4]1,750	December 1984

[1] Families can be entitled to more than one benefit so figures cannot be added to give an overall total.
[2] Includes families with children.
[3] Total includes 1·7 million pensioners and 2·7 million allowance cases.
[4] Principally children in unemployed or single-parent families but also including families experiencing sickness, disability and widowhood.

Dependancy increase recipients and children in recipient families
Great Britain
Table 2

Benefit	*Numbers of recipients with dependancy increase*	*Dependent children*	*Date*
Sickness benefit	45,500	[1]Not applicable	March 1985
Invalidity benefit	391,327	192,927	March 1985
Severe disablement allowance	6,500	5,400	March 1985
Invalid care allowance	1,502	975	May 1987
Retirement pension	144,930	23,590	September 1986
Widowed mothers allowance[4]	58,270	86,310	September 1986
War pensions[2]	157,100	Not available	December 1986
Unemployment benefit	132,705	[1]Not applicable	May 1986
Maternity allowance[3]	149	[1]Not applicable	March 1986

[1] Dependancy increase for adults only.
[2] Disablement pension with dependancy allowance and widows cases with dependent children.
[3] Mother to be can claim addition for partner (specific circumstances apply when not married), if partner's income from earnings and-or occupational pension are below the level of the addition.
[4] Includes overseas cases.

Overseas Health Services

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list visits, showing at what ministerial or official level, which have taken place to *(a)* France, *(b)* New Zealand, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* Australia since 1983 to examine aspects of their health services.

(2) what consideration has been given to, and what studies have taken place into, aspects of health service management or practice in (i) France, (ii) New Zealand, (iii) the United States of America and (iv) Australia since June 1983.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 9 April 1987, c. *411*]: The following is the list of ministerial visits.

Date	*Country*	*Minister*	*Subject of visit*
April 1983	United States of America	Secretary of State for Social Services	Discussions with United States drug companies; drug misuse
September 1984	United States of America	Minister of State for Health	Primary health care
July 1985	United States of America	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health	AIDS
May 1986	United States of America	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health	Organ transplantation
January 1987	United States of America	Secretary of State for Social Services	AIDS

In addition, study trips by officials, generally at grade 7 level or above, have included the following:

Date	*Country*	*Subject of visit*
April 1983	France	Health service organisation
June 1983	United States of America	Health service management
September 1983	United States of America	Contract cleaning
October 1983	United States of America	Patient care systems
November 1983	France	Health care costs
December 1983	United States of America	Dental indicators
December 1984	France	Cancer research
June 1985	United States of America	AIDS
September 1985	United States of America	Delivery of specimens

Date	Country	Subject of visit
October 1985	United States of America	Primary care
November 1985	France	Health promotion/disease prevention
December 1985	United States of America	Software control in medical devices
December 1985	Australia	Hospital computer systems
December 1985	France	Drug pricing mechanisms
January 1986	United States of America	Hospital visit
April 1986	France	Visit to health ministry
May 1986	United States of America	Organ banks
August 1986	United States of America	Visit to Federal Drug Administration
September 1986	France	Information technology
October 1986	France	Cook/chill methods

It is general practice for a report to be prepared after a visit so that information gained and possible lessons to be learnt from foreign experience may be circulated and considered as necessary within the Department.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Canavan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Scotch whisky industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member on 20 January, at column 494.

Foodstuffs (Irradiation)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about the irradiation of foodstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on 9 April, at column 407.

Food Labelling

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on the subject of food labelling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regularly receive comments and inquiries from many sources on a wide range of labelling matters. The most recent representations I have received have been on various aspects of the EC proposals to amend the food labelling directive.

Fences

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been given by way of grant for each year that it has been available to assist farmers in the erection of fences.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The following information may be helpful:

United Kingdom grant paid for fences and associated gates, 1980-86 (£ million)

	England, Wales, Northern Ireland	Scotland[1]
1980	2·0	2·5
1981	3·2	2·2
1982	5·6	2·6
1983	6·5	3·0
1984	8·4	2·3
1985	9·0	3·1
[2]1986	6·5	1·8

[1] Includes hedges, walls and dykes.
[2] Estimate.

Wetlands

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will state, for each year for which the grant has been available, the amount of money given to landowners or farmers for the purpose of draining wetlands.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The following information may be helpful:

United Kingdom grant paid for field drainage including the drainage of wetlands, 1980-1986

	£ million
1980	43·4
1981	41·1
1982	57·0
1983	57·4
1984	74·0
1985	49·3
[1]1986	24·0

[1] Estimate.

Ponds

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will state, for each year the scheme was in operation, the amount of money that was given to farmers by way of grant to assist them to eliminate ponds.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Grants for land reclamation works in Great Britain, including the related elimination of ponds, were discontinued in 1984.

Hedgerows

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been given by way of grant for each year that it has been available to assist farmers to remove hedgerows.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Grants for the removal of hedges were discontinued in December 1986.

Advertising

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of his Department's advertising and promotional budget is spent in regional and local newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The proportion of publicity expenditure spent by the department on local and regional advertising in 1986-87 was 1·4 per cent. This amounted to a total of £5,000.

Financial Management Initiative

Mr. Latham asked the minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the effect on his Department of the financial management initiative.

Mr. Jopling: The financial management initiative covers a wide range of reforms to improve management in central Government in support of the Government's commitment to give value for money spent in the public's name. The initiative has built on work already being done in individual departments and its effects are increasingly indistinguishable from those flowing from other improvements in management and steps to improve value for money.

Major developments in MAFF in response to the initiative have included:

(a) the creation of MINIM, the Ministry's top management system, which provides a basis on which Ministers and senior management review in depth the departments' aims, the objectives of its programmes and the resources used in carrying them out;

(b) the introduction in 1986, following development work in the Ministry's eastern region, of a system of decentralised budgetary control for running cost expenditure. This system currently covers 75 per cent. of the Ministry's manpower and 60 per cent. of running costs. Increased financial responsibility has been delegated to line managers, thereby encouraging them to make more effective and efficient use of resources. The Ministry's supply estimates have been restructured to bring MAFF's running costs together in a single vote and to show the breakdown by the main organisation units (class IV, vote 5 of the 1987-88 Supply Estimates);

(c) the creation of a computer-based management accounting information system to produce monthly reports of expenditure by budget item for managers who control budgets.

The introduction of these systems has also been supported in the Ministry by a comprehensive programme of FMI training for staff at all levels.

FMI systems have had a positive effect in clarifying aims, in reviewing priorities, in providing improved data for decision-making and in identifying the scope for improved value for money. Some of these improvements are shown in the material contained in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56). As my hon. Friend is aware, further information is provided in the NAO report of 21 October 1986 on the financial management initiative (HC. 588) and in the evidence given on that report in December 1986 to the Public Accounts Committee by the Ministry's accounting officer (HC. 61-ii). I am satisfied that the initiative is improving the management of the Ministry and thus securing better value for money.

Common Wheat

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the average price of common wheat received by the producer in the United Kingdom, Germany, and France *(a)* in national currency and *(b)* converted to pound sterling at the market rates prevailing on the latest date for which this information is available.

Mr. Gummer: Common wheat producer prices are not available for the three countries.

For the week ending Wednesday 8 April market prices for milling wheat were as shown below:

	National currency per tonne	*£ per tonne*
Germany (Hamburg)	477·50 DM	162·90
France (Rouen)	1,461·55 FF	149·90
United Kingdom (Yorkshire)	—	[1] 131·50

[1] Indicative quote as at 10 April.
Source: HGCA Weekly Bulletin

Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food how much of the overall expenditure on agriculture, fisheries and food, as shown in the public expenditure White paper is attributable to *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* fisheries, *(c)* food, *(d)* forestry, *(e)* court defence and *(f)* all the other non-agricultural activities including civil defence for 1985-86, 1986-87 and the forecast for 1987-88.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is set out in the table. It has not been possible to isolate expenditure on food.

(£ million)

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Agricultural support	2,160	1,546	1,898
Fisheries support	46	59	56
Forestry	51	53	54
Land Drainage, Flood and Coast protection	167	195	179
Other activities [1]	466	489	496
Total	2,890	2,342	2,683

[1] Includes some services to agriculture, such as research and development local support in Northern Ireland for agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

Pound Sterling

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the average percentage difference between the value of the pound sterling and the green rate for the pound sterling for each six months period since January 1979.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Food Exports (Forms)

Dame Peggy Fenner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek simplification of European Economic Community forms for export of food.

Mr. Gummer: The information required of exporters is kept to the minimum necessary to meet common agricultural policy and Customs and Excise requirements. It is the Government's objective to simplify the paperwork as much as possible. To that end the United Kingdom has taken part in discussions with the European Commission on the introduction, on 1 January 1988, of a revised method of documentation for imports and exports — generally called the single administrative document — and will continue to work for the greatest possible alignment of remaining documents with the SAD.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is transferring milk quota bought under the outgoers scheme from England to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Badgers

Miss Maynard asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food if he intends to extend badger killing to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. My powers in relation to the control of wildlife to prevent the spread of disease to livestock contained in section 21 of the Animal Health Act 1981 do not extend to Northern Ireland.

ENVIRONMENT

Rents

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average level of fair rents registered for unfurnished lettings in the private sector in *(a)* Westminster, *(b)* Tottenham and *(c)* Hampstead in each of the years 1983 to 1986 indicating (i) average weekly rents, (ii) the average cost per square unit of floor space and (iii) rateable values in the most convenient form available.

Mr. Tracey: The information available is from the sample of rents registered in each year by rent officers and it is classified only to London borough level.

Unfurnished private tenancies[1]
Average rents registered

£ per week

	London borough of		
	Westminster	*Haringey*	*Camden*
1983	41·88	16·28	31·28
1984	40·59	18·74	29·21
1985	46·28	19·73	30·51
1986	49·32	21·82	37·48

[1] Excludes housing associations. The mix of properties registered varies from year to year.

Housing

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of *(a)* council, *(b)* private and *(c)* housing association housing starts for each year since 1974 in (i) Yorkshire and Humberside, (ii) Barnsley metropolitan council area and (iii) Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency.

Mr. John Patten: The information for Yorkshire and Humberside for the years 1975 to 1985 appears in table 6.4 of "Housing and Construction Statistics, 1975-1985" and provisional figures for 1986 are in table 1.3 of the quarterly "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 28: copies are available in the Library. In 1974, there were 7,626 dwelling starts for local authorities, 1,024 for housing associations and 10,212 for the private sector in the region; there were another 13 starts for government departments.

Starts reported in the Barnsley area appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are also available in the Library:

	Issue Number	*Table Number*
1974	33	5
1975	37	5
1976	41	5
1977	45	5
1978	49	5
1979	59	4
1980 to 1983	73	1(b) to 1(e)
1984	77	1(b)
1985	78	1(b)

For the years up to 1983, housing associations are included within the category "other public sector". In Barnsley there were 86 starts in this category in 1974, some of which may have been for Government Departments; the starts reported in 1979 and 1983 were all for housing associations. For the first nine months of 1986, no local authority starts have been reported, but 167 for housing associations and 244 for the private sector.

Information is not collected for individual constituencies.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department takes to ensure that the allocation of properties by housing trusts complies with the aims and policies of equal opportunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I will answer this question shortly.

Toilet Flush Systems

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning the change in the water byelaws to allow a 7-litre flush system in toilets.

Mr. John Patten: I have received no recent representations.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there are any restrictions on *(a)* the import and *(b)* the installation of 7-litre toilet flush systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There are no restrictions on the import of toilet flush systems but their installation must comply with the construction and water use requirements of water undertakers' byelaws.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether *(a)* United Kingdom-manufactured and *(b)* imported 7-litre toilet flush systems are governed by water byelaws.

Mr. John Patten: Water byelaws include requirements governing the construction of and water used by toilet flush systems. These requirements apply equally to products of United Kingdom manufacture and to imports.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to remove anomalies in the regulation of United Kingdom manufactured and imported 7-litre toilet flush systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I am not aware of any anomalies in any regulations concerning United Kingdom manufactured and imported toilet flush systems.

Plumbers

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the establishment of a formal registration system for plumbers; and if he will make a statement on plumber registration systems in other European countries.

Mr. John Patten: I do not intend at present to establish a formal registration system for plumbers. The Institute of Plumbing already runs a voluntary registration scheme recently recognised under the British Standards Institute public register inspection maintenance assessment scheme.

Beaches

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the beaches in the United Kingdom which currently meet European Economic Community safety and health standards.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 30 March, at column *418*.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the local authority associations on developing grant-related expenditure assessments for local authorities personal social services expenditure; what steps he has taken to ensure that personal social services grant-related expenditures reflect need; and what proposals he has to develop personal social services grant-related expenditures in the future.

Dr. Boyson: I will answer this question shortly.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, when determining 1988-89 grant-related expenditure assessments for local authorities' expenditure on adult education, he will take account of *(a)* the case for those who are disadvantaged in the labour market to have greater access to relevant courses and *(b)* the variations between local education authorities in the capacity to generate income through fees;

(2) whether he will amend the grant-related expenditure assessment for local authorities' expenditure on the library service to reflect *(a)* the demands generated by the elderly, the unemployed and ethnic minorities and students and *(b)* the provision of libraries and specialised services in regional and business centres.

Dr. Boyson: Grant-related expenditure assessments for 1987-88 were approved by the House on 26 March. We are now consulting the local authority associations on arrangements for the 1988-89 settlement. We intend to bring forward proposals for the 1988-89 settlement in the autumn.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will re-examine the grant-related expenditure assessment for local authorities' expenditure on non-HRA housing expenditure and in particular *(a)* the data sources for the assessment of need and *(b)* alternative treatment of loan charges.

Dr. Boyson: The grant-related expenditure assessment for non-HRA housing expenditure was reviewed fully last year by representatives of central and local government through the grants working group. We do not propose to review it again this year.

Slum Clearance (Compensation)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of freeholders of houses in slum clearance areas seeking compensation on the grounds that repair convenants have not been kept, thereby increasing demand for improvement grants prior to clearance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have no evidence to suggest that action by freeholders of houses in slum clearance areas is increasing the demand for improvement grants.

Compulsory Purchase Order (Kensington and Chelsea)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received from the borough of Kensington and Chelsea an application for confirmation of a compulsory purchase order in respect of six properties at Coulson street and Anderson street, SW3; and if, in view of the time the premises remained empty, he will make it his policy to hold an early inquiry and make an early decision on the application.

Mr. John Patten: Compulsory purchase orders made under the Housing Acts are dealt with as soon as possible, as stated in circular 6/85. The order in question was received on 17 February. An objection to the order has also been received and a local inquiry has been arranged for 17 June.

Play Board

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what arrangements are being made in respect of the staff of Play Board, following the liquidation of ACPR Limited on 31 March;

(2) what time scale he envisages for the conclusion of the discussions relating to children's play, described by the Under-Secretary of State in his speech to the House on 6 April, *Official Report*, column 144; and what interim co-ordinating arrangements are being made following the voluntary liquidation of Play Board.

Mr. Tracey: The Sports Council is now discussing the future development of children's play with local authority

associations and other interested parties and expect to reach conclusions in September. In the meantime the council proposes to continue some of the work undertaken by Play Board through the setting-up of an information and advisory service.

In September 1986 the council and Play Board agreed to start negotiations on our proposal that Play Board's role and functions be merged with those of the council — a proposal which offered the clear prospect of continuing employment on play-related work within the council for Play Board's staff. On March 5 Play Board resolved to withdraw from these negotiations and to enter into liquidation. I very much regret the consequences these decisions have had for Play Board's staff.

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what alternatives to the amalgamation of Play Board with the Sports Council he considered before September 1986; and why he rejected them;

(2) what response he made, or proposes to make, to the representations made by organisations in the field of children's play on the issue of Play Board;

(3) if the former Play Board budget now allocated to the Sports Council is to be retained as a separate budget for children's play; and at what level proportionate to its 1987 value it will be maintained in future years.

(4) what steps he is taking to ensure that the intellectual, emotional and social development of children through play is developed by the Sports Council.

Mr. Tracey: The alternative options considered for the future development of children's play were set out in my reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 9 April at column *391*.

A number of organisations and individuals have written to and discussed with me their concerns about the future funding and independence of children's play. As I have explained to them, I remain of the view that the future development of children's play within the structure of the Sports Council represents the best way of progressing the work begun by Play Board.

Within its grant-aid for 1987-88, the Sports Council has £700,000 separately allocated for children's play. Our proposals envisage that children's play would be treated separately under the council's corporate planning and budgeting arrangements with the proviso that at least half of the moneys available for the Department would be used to pump-prime private sector funds. This arrangement does not affect the continuing support for play under the urban programme—now running at £6 million each year —nor the further substantial resources directed to play by the Departments of Health and Social Security and Education and Science.

I fully appreciate the importance of play in the development of children. Together with continuing support from the Departments of Health and Social Security and Education and Science, I am sure that appropriate arrangements will be identified by the Sports Council which will recognise the full potential of children's play.

Tower Hamlets

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had concerning the recommendations contained in the first report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1986-87, on Bangladeshis in Britain; and, what is his policy as regards the Select Committee's recommendation that Tower Hamlets HIP allocation be significantly increased, at least to the extent needed to prevent further deterioration in housing conditions in the borough.

Mr. John Patten: The main HIP allocations for 1987-88 were made before the Select Committee's report was received and honoured in full the assurances previously given that allocations would be at least 80 per cent. of the initial allocations for 1985-65. Additional allocations are available for schemes to improve conditions on rundown estates, prepared in consultation with Estate Action: Tower Hamlets has already benefited under that heading in 1986-87, and submitted bids for 1987-88, which are being considered.

Decisions about HIP allocations for 1988-89 have not yet been made. Tower Hamlets will be invited to make a HIP submission to the Department later this year, when we shall consider it, together with other evidence about the authority's needs and performance.

The Government will be publishing a response in due course to all the Committee's recommendations.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Tower Hamlets council since May 1986 on the growing cost and number of homeless families in Tower Hamlets; and what response he has made.

Mr. John Patten: The main specific representation was a recent report on homelessness which was discussed with officials on 14 April. We shall take account of all such representations when considering the council's next housing investment programme bid.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the outstanding number of applications for improvement grants for each of the local authorities in England.

Mr. John Patten: Responsibility for administering the home improvement grant system rests with local authorities. The information requested on outstanding applications is not collected centrally.

Widdicombe Report

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the results of his review conducted following recommendation 58 of the Widdicombe report.

Dr. Boyson: My right hon. Friend announced last July that he would be studying the need and desirability of specific powers for local authorities to carry out economic development. He will announce his conclusions as soon as possible.

Harrogate District Council

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what capital allocations have been granted to the Harrogate district council in each year since 1981-82 *(a)* at the beginning of each year and *(b)* as supplementary allocations.

Dr. Boyson: The information requested is as follows:

Harrogate Borough Council Capital Allocations

Financial Year	Initial £	Supplementary £	Total £
1981-82	2,903,000	—	2,903,000
1982-83	3,141,000	103,000	3,244,000
1983-84	3,321,000	726,000	4,047,000
1984-85	2,911,000	—	2,911,000
1985-86	2,262,000	127,000	2,389,000
1986-87	2,040,000	8,000	2,048,000
1987-88	1,811,000	—	1,811,000

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on deferred purchase arrangements entered into by the Harrogate district council.

Dr. Boyson: Harrogate borough council entered into a deferred purchase arrangement in 1977 to finance the construction of a conference centre. This arrangement was terminated in 1982 with the assistance of an approval for additional conventional borrowing from my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State. The approval was given at a time of substantial capital underspending by local authorities nationally in recognition that the borough council was facing unforeseen financial difficulties as a result of its commitment to the conference centre. I have no information as to whether the Council has entered into other such arrangements.

National Play Focus

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which other Government Departments his Department consulted about the future of a national play focus.

Mr. Tracey: The Departments of Health and Social Security, Education and Science, Welsh Office and Northern Ireland Office were consulted during the Department's review in 1986 of its support for the voluntary organisation, Play Board, and have been kept in close touch with subsequent developments.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the London Residuary Body; and what matters were discussed.

Dr. Boyson: My right hon. Friend last met Sir Godfrey Taylor on 5 February to discuss matters relevant to the LRB's functions under the Local Government Act 1985.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of the number of staff in his Department who are female, by grade, expressing each as a percentage of the total staff complement in that grade.

Mr. Ridley: Information for all grades could be given only at disproportionate expense. The information which is readily available relates to staff in post in the main groups of grades at 31 December 1986 and is as follows:

	Female	Male	Total	Percentage of Females
DOE Central				
Open structure	3	38	41	7
Admin EO and above	612	1,397	2,009	30
Admin Clerical	934	681	1,615	57
General Category	49	92	141	34
Science Category	70	362	432	16
P and TO Category	15	300	315	4
Secretarial Category	640	3	643	99
General Service Category	438	446	884	49
Departmental Grades	67	545	612	10
Totals	2,828	3,864	6,692	42
Property Services Agency				
Admin Group—EO and above	727	1,375	2,102	34
Admin Group—Clerical	2,496	1,123	3,619	68
P and TO Works Grades	163	7,924	8,087	2
P and TO Estates Grades	74	570	644	11
P and TO Other Disciplines	52	569	621	8
Secretarial	904	5	909	99
Miscellaneous Grades	353	373	726	48
Total	4,769	11,939	16,708	29

Tyne and Wear Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the people appointed to the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation, their period of office, and the salary payable to them.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend intends to appoint the following to the board of the Tyne and Wear development corporation: Mr. Paul Nicholson (Chairman), Mr. John Ward (Deputy Chairman), Mr. Graeme Anderson, Mr. John Barnsley, Councillor John Donnelly, Mr. John Hall, Dr. Ralph Ley, Mr. Joe Mills,

Councillor Bert Moore and Councillor Septimus Robinson. The chairman will be appointed for three years, the other members for two years.

For salary details I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 30 January 1987 at columns *460-61*.

London Docklands (Property Sales)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the number of houses and flats on London Docklands Development Corporation owned land sold during the past 12 months for *(a)* over £30,000, *(b)* over £40,000, *(c)* over £50,000, *(d)* over £60,000, *(e)* over £70,000, *(f)* over £80,000, *(g)* over, £90,000 and *(h)* over £100,000.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *770*, he will list the equal opportunities policies which his equal opportunities unit has formulated since its introduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: In addition to its work in helping to promote and implement equal opportunities generally, the unit has dealt with specific departmental policy statements on part-time working and job-sharing, encouragement of women to become promotion board members, special leave for staff with domestic responsibilities and other personal reasons, reinstatement after a break in employment, and the provision of personnel management services for disabled staff.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *771*, he will list the measures implemented by his Department to reduce the risk of discrimination in recruitment and promotion.

Mr. Ridley: Measures implemented include the addition of a statement in job advertisements that the Department is an equal opportunity employer; training in equal opportunities for staff involved in recruitment and promotion; clearly defined non-discriminatory criteria for selection and promotion; and the recording of reasons for selection and promotion decisions. Monitoring of the ethnic origins of staff, now in progress on a voluntary basis, will provide useful information in this context.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 23 April 1987

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tropical Timber Resources

54. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the growth and conservation of tropical timber resources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's commitment to the wise use and replenishment of the world's tropical forests has been made clear on many occasions, most recently by myself during questions on 3 November 1986, at column 686. They already support forest management projects in rain forest zones through the aid programme and are ready to consider further proposals. The Government have also given their support to the Food and Agriculture Organisation's tropical forestry action plan, which is providing a valuable framework for the co-ordination of programmes and policies of donor and aid recipient countries.

The Government ratified the international tropical timber agreement in 1984 and are a member of the related Tropical Timber Organisation, which was established in 1986. One of the principal functions of this organisation is to seek to encourage the development of the trade in tropical hardwoods on the basis of sustainable and renewable resources.

Population Projects (Aid)

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions for 1987 are being made to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the World Health Organisation's special programme on human reproduction.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have made the following pledges for 1987, subject to parliamentary approval:

(a) International Planned Parenthood Federation: £6·6 million (this figure includes £0·6 million to help the federation develop its capacity to combat AIDS);

(b) United Nations Fund for Population Activities: £5·0 million;

(c) World Health Organisation's special programme on human reproduction: £2·2 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Prevention

Mr. Max Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with chief constables the issuing of guidance to crime prevention officers about visiting all pensioner households to give advice on security and related matters.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under existing informal arrangements, the Home Office already has regular contacts with the Association of Chief Police Officers about all aspects of crime prevention, and we believe that the need to ensure that there is adequate provision of sensible advice to the elderly about personal and household security issues is already well understood by chief officers. Courses provided for crime prevention officers at the Home Office crime prevention centre include training on the provision of advice to the elderly and how to give it. Such advice can, of course, be provided in various ways and I am aware that a number of police forces have mounted special campaigns, often working with voluntary agencies, to reach the elderly in an effective and sensitive way.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider making grants available to all pensioner households to provide basic household protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are a number of local schemes run, for example, by local authorities or crime prevention panels, for supplying domestic security equipment free or at very low cost to those most in need, primarily pensioner households. Central Government funds provided through the Department of Environment's urban and housing programmes, and the Manpower Services Commission's community programme, are also being used in schemes to make homes more secure.

Before instituting any national scheme to provide grants for domestic security, the Government would need to be satisfied that the scheme was the most effective way of improving the security of those in need. In the light of the recommendations on this issue made by the Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention, and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the ministerial group on crime prevention has been considering what further measures the Government might take, though it is too early to say what the outcome of this consideration will be.

WALES

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the remit of the Welsh Health Promotion Authority.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The remit of the new authority, whose establishment has been widely and warmly welcomed, is contained in the policy memorandum which we have issued today; a copy has been placed in the Library. This follows consultation on a draft of the document with those with an interest in health promotion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Timber

55. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of annual British timber requirements is met by tropical sources.

Mr. Howard: In 1985, the last year for which full statistics are available, 6·8 per cent. of the annual British timber requirement was met by timber originating from tropical sources.

Textiles

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the embargo recently imposed by the European Community on imports of cotton bed sheets from Pakistan.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following evidence of market disruption submitted by a number of member states, on 5 March 1987 the European Community imposed a provisional quota of 1,786 tonnes for three months on imports of goods covered by MFA category 20, woven bedlinen, from Pakistan to member states other than France and Italy (where quotas were already in force). The United Kingdom share of this quota is 391 tonnes. The provisional quota was imposed under the terms of article 8 of the EC-Pakistan bilateral textiles agreement, under the multi-fibre arrangement. A first consultation took place between the European Community and Pakistan on 2-3 April with the aim of agreeing a definitive quota level. No conclusion was reached and further consultations will take place shortly.

EC (Manufacturing)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the surplus or deficit in manufacturing trade with the European Economic Community in the most recent period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for each of the previous 20 annual periods in respect of the nations now compromising the European Economic Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is in the following table:

United Kingdom balance of trade in manufactures[1] with other European Community[2] countries
Balance of Payments basis

	£ million
1966	[3]392
1967	[3]266
1968	[3]306
1969	[3]545
1970	643
1971	426
1972	55
1973	−368
1974	−507
1975	−588
1976	−476
1977	−488
1978	−1,727
1979	−2,580
1980	−1,168
1981	−2,613
1982	−4,335
1983	−7,174
1984	−8,082
1985	−8,683
1986	−10,058

[1] Standard International Trade Classification, Section 5 to 8.
[2] Present membership throughout.
[3] Overseas Trade Statistics Basis—imports valued inclusive of insurance and freight—the corresponding figure for 1970 is £560 million.
Sources: Department of Trade and Industry *Overseas Trade Statistics.*

EMPLOYMENT

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the man-years effort required by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to give approval to the safety case for *(a)* stage 1, *(b)* stage 2 and *(c)* stage 3 decommissioning of the first magnox power station; whether such estimates include work preparatory to receipt of the safety case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: At this stage only a preliminary and provisional estimate of two to three man-years can be made as the process is reactive and iterative; and the effort required is determined to some extent by factors outside the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate's control, such as the acceptability of the early pre-decommissioning safety reports prepared by operators.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the man-years effort employed by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in *(a)* generic decommissioning work and *(b)* magnox decommissioning work, in each recent year; what resources are allocated to such work in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Man-year effort employed by the inspectorate in the last financial year has been less than half a man-year each on generic and magnox decommissioning work.

In the current financial year between one and two man-year's effort is available for assessment of decommissioning nuclear installations.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list and describe the research and development work done since July 1985 on the decommissioning of nuclear power stations, in national and European Community projects; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what further research and development work has been done on the decommissioning of magnox power stations since July 1985; what has been the cost of such work; what additional work is planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The main R and D work in the United Kingdom in the decommissioning field relates to the project to decommission the Windscale advanced gas-cooled reactor to stage 3. This work is also relevant to magnox decommissioning. Items covered include:

(a) work to specify a remotely operated handling machine now under manufacture;
(b) work to specify a manipulator, now under manufacture, which will be used with the remote handling machine;
(c) establishment of cutting, ventilation and filtration techniques;
(d) establishment of remote viewing techniques by TV;
(e) specification of a package for the storage, transport and eventual disposal of the radioactive waste.

There is also work on decommissioning the Dounreay fast reactor (which was shut down in 1977) towards stage 2. Recent R and D includes work on treatment of the liquid metal coolant.

The current European Community decommissioning R and D programme includes projects in the following areas:

(a) long-term integrity of buildings and systems;
(b) decontamination for decommissioning purposes;
(c) dismantling techniques;
(d) treatment of specific waste materials: steel, concrete and graphite;
(e) large containers for radioactive waste produced in dismantling nuclear installations;
(f) estimation of quantities of radioactive wastes arising from decommissioning nuclear installations in the Community;
(g) influence of installation design features on decommissioning.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the earliest date at which research and development work on the decommissioning of magnox power stations is expected to be sufficiently far advanced for a safety case for stage 3 decommissioning of any magnox station to be submitted to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the earliest date at which research and development work on the decommissioning of magnox power stations is expected to be sufficiently far advanced for a safety case for stage 2 decommissioning of any magnox station to be submitted to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the earliest date at which research and development work on the decommissioning of magnox power stations is expected to be sufficiently far advanced for a safety case for stage 1 decommissioning of any magnox station to be submitted to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what decommissioning studies have had regard to aspects of the safety and practicability of the decommissioning of a magnox power station taking place on a site shared with operational nuclear reactor or a further nuclear power station under construction; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised that pre-decommissioning safety reports will be submitted to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate on a time scale appropriate to its requirements. The safety implications of decommissioning a nuclear power station on a site shared with an operational reactor, or one under construction, is one of the factors which will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and magnox licensees on the required scope and content of a safety case for decommissioning operations; whether the scope and content of a safety case for stage 1, stage 2 or stage 3 has been agreed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised that discussions between the CEGB and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate are currently in progress to establish the general scope, content, format and timing of pre-decommissioning safety reports for magnox stations which will be submitted to the NII about two years before the final shutdown of a station or before the appropriate stage of decommissioning. Agreement has yet to be reached on the final content and timing of such submissions which will, however, follow the general guidelines set down in the IAEA safety series document on the decommissioning of land-based nuclear reactor plants.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AIDS (Palace of Westminster Staff)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of the Palace of Westminster to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *424*]: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Lord Privy Seal whether any current or former staff of the Palace of Westminster have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *424*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on Wednesday 22 April.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Lord Privy Seal what steps he has taken to ensure staff of the Palace of Westminster are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *424*]: In April 1986 the Management and Personnel Office, after consulting the chief medical officer, DHSS, circulated all departments with guidance to managers and model notes for staff. Copies of those notes and also of the Department of Employment—Health and Safety Executive book "AIDS and Employment" have been made available to management and staff of the House.

I understand that copies of both those pieces of guidance are available in the House of Commons Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Focus for National Play

Mr. Clelland asked the Prime Minister which Government Departments have been involved in consultations on the future of a focus for national play.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Health and Social Security, Education and Science, Scottish Office, Welsh Office, and Northern Ireland Office were consulted in 1986 during the Department of the Environment's review of its support for the voluntary organisation, Play Board. All have been kept in close touch with subsequent developments.

Soviet Union (Bibles)

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if, following her official visit to Zagorsk to light a candle, she will raise with the Soviet Government the availability of bibles in the Soviet Union and the current prohibition on importing bibles; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have made clear to the Soviet authorities my concern for full freedom of worship in the Soviet Union, and I shall continue to press for this in the future.

Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the latest reports of the pay review bodies.

The Prime Minister: The 1987 reports of the Review Bodies on the pay of Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine, Doctors and Dentists, and the Armed Forces, and of the Top Salaries Review Body, have been published today. Copies are now available in the Vote office. The Government are grateful to members of the review bodies for these reports and the time and care which they have put into their preparation.

The following table shows the increases in pay rates recommended by the review bodies and their cost:

Review body	*Average increase Per cent.*	*Range of increase Per cent.*	*Cost*[1] *£ million*
Nurses, midwives and health visitors	9·50	5·00-12·70	447
Professions allied to medicine	9·10	6·00-12·60	39
Doctors and dentists	7·70	7·00- 8·25	230
Armed forces	5·96	4·00- 7·00	200
Top salaries	4·80	4·60- 5·20	4

[1] Including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions where appropriate.

The Government have decided that the increases recommended by the review bodies, with the exception of those recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body, should be implemented in full with effect from 1 April 1987. The TSRB recommendations will be implemented as to 4·25 per cent. from 1 April 1987, with the balance from 1 October 1987, reflecting the offers made to civil servants in grades just below those covered by the recommendations.

The cost of the awards this year for the AFPRB and TSRB groups will be met from within existing public expenditure programme totals. In the case of the health services, however, the Government recognise that the full costs could not be accommodated within existing provisions without adversely affecting services to patients. The Government have therefore decided to provide an extra £328 million for health authority cash limits from the reserve for this year. Of the remaining cost, £248 million is already fully covered within the allocations made for this year, leaving a balance of £30 million to be covered from cost improvements, including the beneficial effects of the pay award in retaining nursing staff and reducing the use of agency nurses. The Government have similarly decided to provide an additional £68 million to the family practitioner services from the reserve for this year.

The pay rates and scales resulting from the decisions will be promulgated as soon as possible for all the groups concerned. Pensions will be based on the salaries actually in payment in accordance with the principle set out in my written answer of 13 April 1984, at column 383.

I am today announcing separately the Government's decision to proceed with the scheme for discretionary pay at Civil Service grades 2 and 3, on which there has recently been extensive consultation, as part of the Government's policy that there should be a strengthening of the link between pay and performanc at all levels within the Civil Service. It is expected that discretionary pay increases will be in effect as from 1 October 1987, at the rates recommended by the TSRB.

Civil Service (Performance-related Pay)

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister what progress has been made with the introduction of performance-related pay in the Civil Service.

The Prime Minister: The Government are in favour of strengthening the link between pay and performance at all levels in the Civil Service.

At the most senior levels a scheme for the introduction of discretionary increments for staff in grades 2 and 3 is being introduced this year in accordance with the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body. This scheme will provide additional pay for the best performers in recognition of sustained high performance. The first increments will be in payment with effect from 1 October and will be withdrawable on a mark-time basis where performance falls off over a prolonged period. I am placing details of the scheme in the Library of the House.

For staff from grade 3 down to grade 7 a scheme for the annual award of performance bonuses has been in operation on an experimental basis since April 1985. This experiment will end in March 1988, when it will be replaced with a new performance-related scheme for grades 4 to 7 which will take account of experience with the performance bonus experiment. The details of the new scheme will be announced in due course after consultation with staff interests, but as an interim measure we have proposed to the unions concerned that a new performance point should be introduced at grade 5 with effect from 1 September 1987 in respect of people who have been on the maximum of their scale for at least one year. The receipt of this new increment would be linked to performance markings in the annual reports of the individuals concerned.

For staff who have not yet reached the normal maximum salaries for these grades we intend to bring forward proposals which will enable them to earn accelerated incremental progression in return for outstanding performance coupled with the with olding of increments in the case of performance which does not fully meet the requirements of the grade.

We have also entered into a provisional agreement with the Institution of Professional Civil Servants under which we expect a start to be made in April 1988 on using discretionary range points of pay, again linked to performance markings in annual appraisal reports. This arrangement covers staff in most of the grades for which the IPCS has sole national representation.

Taken together these new arrangements mean that from April 1988 over 80,000 civil servants will be in grades covered by performance-related pay. This represents a major step forward in the management of the Civil Service. We hope that it will be possible to bring other staff not covered by these new arrangements within the scope of similar schemes in due course.

Sir Maurice Oldfield

Sir Peter Blaker asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the recent allegations concerning Sir Maurice Oldfield in relation to the security of the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Sir Maurice Oldfield became Security Co-ordinator in Northern Ireland in October 1979. Subsequently reports were received which caused his

positive vetting clearance to be reviewed. In March 1980, in the course of that review, he made an admission that he had from time to time engaged in homosexual activities. His positive vetting clearance was withdrawn. By this time he was already a sick man; he finally ceased to serve as Security Co-ordinator in Northern Ireland when a successor took over in June 1980; he died in March 1981.

There was a lengthy and thorough investigation by the Security Service, which included many interviews with Sir Maurice Oldfield himself, to examine whether there was any reason to suppose that he himself or the interests of the country might have been compromised. The conclusion was that, though his conduct had been a potential risk to security, there was no evidence or reason whatsoever to suggest that security had ever been compromised; indeed, he had contributed notably to a number of security and intelligence successes which would not have been achieved had there been a breach of security. That conclusion stands.

The facts of the case were made known to the Security Commission, when it undertook the review of security procedures and practices, including vetting, in the public service which I commissioned in March 1981. In that report the commission dealt with criteria for positive vetting clearances and with the security implications of male homosexuality. I made it clear in my statement on the Security Commission's report, which was presented to Parliament in May 1982 as Cmnd. 8540, that the Government accepted the Security Commission's report and were acting upon its recommendations.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 April.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

SCOTLAND

Rechem Plant, Bonnybridge

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to what chemical substances, in what annual volumes, and by what methods of treatment, were processed by the Rechem plant in Bonnybridge, as to where those chemicals are now being treated, and by what processes; and what complaints have so far been received from residents of the areas in which the reprocessing plants dealing with these chemicals are situated.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not held centrally. However, the hon. Member may care to note the following possible sources of information:

(a) regarding substances processed at Bonnybridge—Rechem International and Falkirk district council.

(b) where chemicals now being treated—the second report of the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate (a copy of which is in the Library) and local authorities identified in that report.

(c) any complaints about current treatment — the relevant local authorities, and the Department of the Environment Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution.

Forth River Purification Board

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures he has available for staffing levels, actual and establishment, of the Forth river purification board.

Mr. Ancram: The establishment level at 31 December 1986 was 73 full-time and 10 part-time staff. One full-time post was vacant at that date.

Scottish Development Agency (Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent by the Scottish Development Agency in *(a)* Fife, *(b)* Dunfermline district and *(c)* Kirkcaldy district in each year since 1975, and as a proportion of total expenditure on (i) environmental improvement, (ii) industrial investment and (iii) all Scottish Development Agency expenditure.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *657*]: The information, which is readily available only from the financial year 1981-82, is as follows:

	1981-82		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85*		*1985-86*	
	£000	*per cent.*	*£000*	*per cent.*	*£000*	*per cent.*	*£000*	*per cent.*	*£000*	*per cent.*
Fife										
Environmental improvement	1,615	6·7	924	3·3	500	1·7	524	1·4	1,035	2·5
Industrial investment	101	1·8	261	2·9	849	10·0	223	2·8	186	3·3
All programmes	2,970	3·4	4,812	4·6	2,880	3·0	1,597	1·7	4,094	3·8
Dunfermline District										
Environmental improvement	767	3·2	466	1·7	189	0·6	264	0·7	586	1·4
Industrial investment	75	1·3	107	1·2	342	4·0	48	0·6	172	3·1
All programmes	1,397	1·6	3,068	3·0	1,306	1·3	690	0·7	2,132	2·0
Kirkcaldy District										
Environmental improvement	699	2·9	387	1·4	306	1·0	202	0·6	373	0·9
Industrial investment	26	0·4	122	1·4	283	3·3	185	2·3	—	—
All programmes	1,199	1·4	1,266	1·3	1,114	1·1	484	0·5	1,636	1·5

Note: The base for the percentage calculations is total agency expenditure on the relevant programme in the year in question excluding expenditure which cannot be allocated geographically.

Police

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he will state for each police force in Scotland the location of manned police stations or substations *(a)* closed down and *(b)* opened since 1979.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply* 8 April 1987, c. *289*]: The information is as follows:

Force	*Police Stations closed down since 1979*	*Police Stations opened since 1979*
Central Scotland Police	"A" Division Alva, Buchlyvie Cambusbarron, Causewayhead Clackmannan, Cowie Dollar, Doune, Fallin, Fintry, Killearn, Kippen, Menstrie, Plean, Raploch, Sauchie, St Ninians, Whins of Milton. "B" Division Airth, Bog Road, Brightons, Longcroft, Redding, Bonnybridge, Camelon, Larbert, Whitecross, Bainsford, Avonbridge, Carronshore, Laurieston, Polmont, Slamannan, Shieldhill.	"A" Division Bannockburn (Replacement) "B" Division Maddiston (Replacement) Bo'ness (Replacement)
Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary	Nil	Nil
Fife Constabulary	Thornton	Dalgety Bay
Grampian Police	Cammachmore College Street, Aberdeen	Portlethen Windmill Brae
Lothian and Borders Police	Ayton, Chirnside, Cockburnspath, Cockenzie, East Linton, Greenlaw, Heriot, Yetholm	Broxburn (Replacement) Dalkeith (Replacement) Fauldhouse (Replacement) Whitburn (Replacement) Wester Hailes
Northern Constabulary	Firth Nigg (oil related)	St. Margaret's Hope Caol Kyleakin (Temporarily closed) Symbister
Strathclyde Police	Turnbull Street, Glasgow, Glenmavis, Stepps, Tarbolton.	London Road (Replacement) Erskine Troon (Replacement) Shettleston (Replacement) Cumbernauld (Replacement) Stonehouse (Replacement)
Tayside Police	Nil	Baluniefield Lochee (Replacement) Maryfield (Replacement) Ryehill

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state, for each police force in Scotland, the number and location of manned police stations or substations in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986 or the latest available year, with a breakdown of the figures for each police force in Scotland.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 April 1987, c. *287*]: The information is as follows:

CENTRAL SCOTLAND POLICE

Manned Police Stations in 1979—56

Manned Police Stations in 1986—22

1979

Police HQ Stirling

A Division

Aberfoyle
Alloa
Alva
Balfron
Bannockburn
Blanefield
Bridge of Allan
Buchlyvie
Callander
Cambusbarron
Causewayhead
Clackmannan
Cowie
Crianlarich
Dollar
Doune
Drymen
Dunblane
Fallin
Fintry
Killearn
Killin
Kippen

Lochearnhead
Menstrie
Plean
Raploch
Sauchie
St. Ninians
Tillicoultry
Tullibody
Whins of Milton

B Division
Airth
Avonbridge
Bainsford
Bog Road
Bo'ness
Bonnybridge
Brightons
Camelon
Carronshore
Denny
Falkirk
Grangemouth
Grangemouth Docks
Larbert
Laurieston
Longcroft
Maddiston
Polmont
Redding
Shieldhill
Slamannan
Stenhousemuir
Whitecross

1986
Police HQ Stirling

A Division
Aberfoyle
Alloa
Balfron
Bannockburn
Blanefield
Bridge of Allan
Callander
Crianlarich
Drymen
Dunblane
Killin
Lochearnhead
Tillicoultry
Tullibody

B Division
Bo'ness
Denny
Falkirk
Grangemouth
Grangemouth Docks
Maddiston
Stenhousemuir

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY CONSTABULARY
Manned Police Stations in 1979—26
Manned Police Stations in 1986—26
1979
Police HQ Dumfries

Annan
Canonbie
Castle Douglas
Crocketford
Dalbeattie
Dalry
Gatehouse
Glenluce
Gretna
Kirkconnel
Kirkcudbright
Langholm
Locharbriggs
Lochmaben
Lockerbie
Moffat
Newton Stewart
Portpatrick
Port William
Sandhead
Sanquhar
Stranraer
Thornhill
Whithorn
Wigtown

1986
Police HQ Dumfries

Annan
Canonbie
Castle Douglas
Crocketford
Dalbeattie
Dalry
Gatehouse
Glenluce
Gretna
Kirkconnel
Kirkcudbright
Langholm
Locharbriggs
Lochmaben
Lockerbie
Moffat
Newton Stewart
Portpatrick
Port William
Sandhead
Sanquhar
Stranraer
Thornhill
Whithorn
Wigtown

FIFE CONSTABULARY
Manned Police Stations in 1979—54
Manned Police Stations in 1986—54
1979
Police HQ Dysart

Central Division
Burntisland
Cardenden
Coaltown-of-Wemyss
East Wemyss
Glenrothes
Kennoway
Kinghorn
Kinglassie
Kirkcaldy:
Cairns Street
Cairnwell Place
St. Brycedale Road
Leslie
Leven
Markinch
Methil
Thornton
Windygates

Eastern Division
Anstruther
Auchtermuchty
Ceres
Colinsburgh
Crail
Elie
Falkland
Freuchie
Guardbridge

Kingsbarns
Ladybank
Largoward
Letham
Leuchars
Lundin Links
Newburgh
Newport-on-Tay
St. Andrews
St. Monans
Springfield
Strathmiglo
Tayport

Western Division
Aberdour
Ballingry
Blairhall
Charlestown
Cowdenbeath
Crossgates
Culross
Dunfermline
Kelty
Kincardine-on-Forth
Lochgelly
Newmills
North Queensferry
Oakley

1986
Police HQ Dysart

Central Division
Burntisland
Cardenden
Coaltown-of-Wemyss
East Wemyss
Glenrothes
Kennoway
Kinghorn
Kinglassie
Kirkcaldy:
Cairns Street
Cairnwell Place
St. Brycedale Road
Leslie
Leven
Markinch
Methil
Windygates

Eastern Division
Anstruther
Auchtermuchty
Ceres
Colinsburgh
Crail
Elie
Falkland
Freuchie
Guardbridge
Kingsbarns
Ladybank
Largoward
Letham
Leuchars
Lundin Links
Newburgh
Newport-on-Tay
St. Andrews
St. Monans
Springfield
Strathmiglo
Tayport

Western Division
Aberdour
Ballingry
Blairhall
Charlestown
Cowdenbeath
Crossgates
Culross
Dalgety Bay
Dunfermline
Kelty
Kincardine-on-Forth
Lochgelly
Newmills
North Queensferry
Oakley

GRAMPIAN POLICE

Manned Police Stations in 1979—74
Manned Police Stations in 1986—74
1979
Police HQ, Aberdeen

A Division
Aberchirder
Aberlour
Banff
Buckie
Cullen
Cuminestown
Dufftown
Elgin
Fochabers
Forres
Fyvie
Hopeman
Keith
Lhanbryde
Lossiemouth
Macduff
Portsoy
Rothes
Tomintoul
Turriff

B Division
Aberdeen:
Airport
Bridge of Don
Byron Square
Cairncry
Dyce
Mastrick
Mile End
Old Aberdeen
Skene
Tillydrone
Bucksburn

C Division
Aberdeen:
Alford Place
College Street
Culter
Cults
Fonthill
Harbour
Hazlehead
Kincorth
Nigg
Queens Cross
Torry

D Division
Aboyne
Alford
Ballater
Banchory
Boddam
Braemar
Cammachmore
Cruden Bay
Echt
Ellon

Fraserburgh
Huntley
Insch
Inverbervie
Inverurie
Kemnay
Kintore
Laurencekirk
Lumsden
Maud
Mintlaw
New Deer
New Pitsligo
Oldmeldrum
Peterhead
Rosehearty
Stonehaven
Strathdon
Strichen
Tarland
Tarves

1986
Police HQ Aberdeen

A Division
Aberchirder
Aberlour
Banff
Buckie
Cullen
Cuminestown
Dufftown
Elgin
Fochabers
Forres
Fyvie
Hopeman
Keith
Lhanbryde
Lossiemouth
Macduff
Portsoy
Rothes
Tomintoul
Turriff

B Division
Aberdeen:
Airport
Bridge of Don
Byron Square
Cairncry
Dyce
Mastrick
Mile End
Old Aberdeen
Skene
Tillydrone
Bucksburn

C Division
Aberdeen:
Alford Place
Culter
Cults
Fonthill
Harbour
Hazlehead
Kincorth
Nigg
Queens Cross
Torry
Windmill Brae

D Division
Aboyne
Alford
Ballater
Banchory
Boddam
Braemar
Cruden Bay
Echt
Ellon
Fraserburgh
Huntly
Insch
Inverbervie
Inverurie
Kemnay
Kintore
Laurencekirk
Lumsden
Maud
Mintlaw
New Deer
New Pitsligo
Oldmeldrum
Peterhead
Portlethen
Rosehearty
Stonehaven
Strathdon
Strichen
Tarland
Tarves

LOTHIAN AND BORDERS POLICE
Manned Police Stations in 1979—68
Manned Police Stations in 1986—61
1979
Police HQ, Edinburgh

A Division
Edinburgh:
Causewayside
Central
Craigmillar
Mayfield

B Division
Edinburgh:
Drylaw
Garfield Square

C Division
Edinburgh:
Corstorphine
Oxgangs
Turnhouse
West End

D Division
Edinburgh:
Albert Dock
Leith
Portobello

E Division
Bonnyrigg
Cockenzie
Dalkeith
Danderhall
Dunbar
East Linton
Gorebridge
Haddington
Loanhead
Musselburgh
Newbattle
North Berwick
Penicuik
Prestonpans
Rosewell
Tranent

F Division
Armadale
Balerno
Bathgate
Blackburn

Broxburn
Fauldhouse
Linlithgow
Livingston
Mid Calder
South Queensferry
West Calder
Whitburn

G Division
Ayton
Broughton
Chirnside
Cockburnspath
Coldingham
Coldstream
Duns
Earlston
Eyemouth
Galashiels
Greenlaw
Hawick
Heriot
Innerleithen
Jedburgh
Kelso
Lauder
Melrose
Newcastleton
Peebles
St. Boswells
Selkirk
Stow
West Linton
Whitecraig
Yetholm

1986
Police HQ, Edinburgh

A Division
Edinburgh:
Causewayside
Central
Craigmillar
Mayfield

B Division
Edinburgh:
Drylaw
Gayfield Square

C Division
Edinburgh
Airport
Corstorphine
Oxgangs
West End
Wester Hailes

D Division
Edinburgh:
Albert Dock
Leith
Portobello

E Division
Bonnyrigg
Dalkeith
Danderhall
Dunbar
Gorebridge
Haddington
Loanhead
Musselburgh
Newbattle
North Berwick
Penicuik
Prestonpans
Rosewell
Tranent

F Division
Armadale
Balerno
Bathgate
Blackburn
Broxburn
Fauldhouse
Linlithgow
Livingston
Mid Calder
South Queensferry
West Calder
Whitburn

G Division
Broughton
Coldingham
Coldstream
Duns
Earlston
Eyemouth
Galashiels
Hawick
Innerleithen
Jedburgh
Kelso
Lauder
Melrose
Newcastleton
Peebles
St. Boswells
Selkirk
Stow
West Linton
Whitecraig

NORTHERN CONSTABULARY
Manned Police Stations in 1979—93
Manned Police Stations in 1986—95
1979
Police HQ Inverness

Northern Division
Baltasound
Bettyhill
Brae
Castletown
Cullivoe
Dunbeath
Dunrossness
Firth
Halkirk
Kirkwall
Lerwick
Longhope
Lybester
Melvich
Mey
Reay
Scalloway
Stromness
Thurso
Tongue
Watten
Wick

Central Division
Alness
Aultbea
Back
Balallan
Barra
Barvas
Benbecula
Bonar Bridge
Brora
Carloway
Conan Bridge

Cromarty
Dingwall
Dornoch
Evanton
Fearn
Fortrose
Gairloch
Garrabost
Golspie
Helmsdale
Invergordon
Lairg
Lochboisdale
Lochcarron
Lochinver
Lochmaddy
Muir of Ord
Nigg
North Kessock
Port of Ness
Rhiconich
Stornoway
Strathpeffer
Tain
Tarbert
Ullapool

Southern Division
Ardersier
Ardvasar
Arisaig
Aviemore
Banavie
Beauly
Boat of Garten
Broadford
Cannich
Carrbridge
Daviot
Drumnadrochit
Dunvegan
Fort Augustus
Fort William
Foyers
Glencoe
Grantown
Inverness
Kingussie
Kinlochmore
Kinmylies
Kirkhill
Kyle
Mallaig
Nairn
Nethybridge
Newtownmore
Portree
Smithton
Speanbridge
Strontian
Uig

1986
Police HQ, Inverness

Northern Division
Baltasound
Bettyhill
Brae
Castletown
Cullivoe
Dunbeath
Dunrossness
Halkirk
Kirkwall
Lerwick
Longhope
Lybster
Melvich
Mey
Reay
Scalloway
St. Margaret's Hope
Stromness
Symbister
Thurso
Tongue
Watten
Wick

Central Division
Alness
Aultbea
Back
Balallan
Barra
Barvas
Benbecula
Bonar Bridge
Brora
Carloway
Conon Bridge
Cromarty
Dingwall
Dornoch
Evanton
Fearn
Fortrose
Gairloch
Garrabost
Golspie
Helmsdale
Invergordon
Lairg
Lochboisdale
Lochcarron
Lochinver
Lochmaddy
Muir of Ord
North Kessock
Port of Ness
Rhiconich
Stornoway
Strathpeffer
Tain
Tarbert
Ullapool

Southern Division
Ardersier
Ardvasar
Arisaig
Aviemore
Banavie
Beauly
Boat of Garten
Broadford
Cannich
Caol
Carribridge
Daviot
Drumnadrochit
Dunvegan
Fort Augustus
Fort William
Foyers
Glencoe
Grantown
Inverness
Kingussie
Kinlochmore
Kinmylies
Kirkhill
Kyle
Kyleakin
Mallaig
Nairn
Nethybridge
Newtownmore
Portree

Smithton
Speanbridge
Strontian
Uig

STRATHCLYDE POLICE

Manned Police Stations in 1979—175
Manned Police Stations in 1986—173

1979

Police HQ, Pitt Street, Glasgow

A Division
Cranstonhill
Stewart Street, Glasgow

B Division
Clydebank
Drumchapel
Garscadden
Partick

C Division
Lambhill
Maryhill
Milngavie and Bearsden
Saracen
Temple

D Division
Baird Street, Glasgow
Bishopbriggs
Blackhill
Easterhouse
Gartcosh
Kirkintilloch
Lennoxtown
Muirhead
Springburn
Stepps

E Division
Baillieston
Barlanark
London Road, Glasgow
Shettleston
Turnbull Street, Glasgow

F Division
Cambuslang
Castlemilk
Craigie Street, Glasgow
Gorbals
Pollokshaws
Rutherglen

G Division
Cardonald
Clarkston
Eaglesham
Giffnock
Govan
Newton Mearns
Plantation
Pollok
Thornliebank

K Division
Barrhead
Bishopton
Elderslie
Forth
Glasgow Airport
Hillington
Houston
Howwood
Johnstone
Kilbarchan
Linwood
Lochwinnoch
Neilston
Paisley
Ralston
Renfrew
Upiawmoor

L Division
Alexandria
Appin
Ardrishaig
Arrochar
Bowmore
Bunessan
Campbeltown
Cardross
Carradale
Connel
Craignure
Dalmally
Dumbarton
Dunoon
Garelochhead
Gartocharn
Helensburgh
Innellan
Inveraray
Kames
Kilcreggan
Kilmun
Lochgilphead
Lochgoilhead
Luss
Oban
Port Ellen
Rothesay
Salen
Sandbank
Strachur
Tarbert
Tayvallich
Tiree
Tobermory

N Division
Airdrie
Caldercruix
Chapelhall
Coatbridge
Cumbernauld
Glenboig
Glen Mavis
Kilsyth
Plains
Salsburgh

P Division
Bellshill
Craigneuk
Harthill
Motherwell
Netherton
Newarthill
Newmains
Shotts
Viewpark
Wishaw

Q Division
Abington
Biggar
Blackwood
Blantyre
Carluke
Carnwath
Carstairs
Crawford
Crossford
Douglas
East Kilbride
Forth
Hamilton

High Blantyre
Lanark
Larkhall
Law
Leadhills
Lesmahagow
Rigside
Shawsburn
Stonehouse
Strathaven
Uddingston

R Division
Auchinleck
Ayr
Ballantrae
Cumnock
Dailly
Dalmellington
Drongan
Maucline
Maybole
Muirkirk
New Cumnock
Prestwick
Prestwick Airport
Tarbolton
Troon

U Division
Beith
Brodick
Dalry
Darvel
Galston
Irvine
Kilbirnie
Kilmarnock
Kilwinning
Lamlash
Largs
Millport
Newmilns
Saltcoats
Skelmorlie
Stewarton
West Kilbride

X Division
Gourock
Greenock
Inverkip
Kilmacolm
Port Glasgow

1986
Police HQ, Pitt Street, Glasgow

A Division
Cranstonhill
Stewart Street, Glasgow

B Division
Clydebank
Drumchapel
Garscadden
Partick

C Division
Lambhill
Maryhill
Milngavie and Bearsden
Saracen
Temple

D Division
Baird Street, Glasgow
Bishopbriggs
Blackhill
Easterhouse
Gartcosh
Kirkintilloch
Lennoxtown
Muirhead
Springburn

E Division
Baillieston
Barlanark
London Road, Glasgow
Shettleston

F Division
Cambuslang
Castlemilk
Craigie Street, Glasgow
Gorbals
Pollokshaws
Rutherglen

G Division
Cardonald
Clarkston
Eaglesham
Giffnock
Govan
Newton Mearns
Plantation
Pollok
Thornliebank

K Division
Barrhead
Bishopton
Elderslie
Erskine
Forth
Glasgow Airport
Hillington
Houston
Howwood
Johnstone
Kilbarchan
Linwood
Lochwinnoch
Neilston
Paisley
Ralston
Renfrew
Uplawmoor

L Division
Alexandria
Appin
Ardrishaig
Arrochar
Bowmore
Bunessan
Campbeltown
Cardross
Carradale
Connel
Craigmore
Dalmally
Dumbarton
Dunoon
Garelochhead
Gartocharn
Helensburgh
Innellan
Inveraray
Kames
Kilcreggan
Kilmun
Lochgilphead
Lochgoilhead
Luss
Oban
Port Ellen
Rothesay

Salen
Sandbank
Strachur
Tarbert
Taynuilt
Tiree
Tobermory

N Division
Airdrie
Caldercruix
Chapelhall
Coatbridge
Cumbernauld
Glenboig
Kilsyth
Plains
Salsburgh

P Division
Bellshill
Craigneuk
Harthill
Motherwell
Netherton
Newarthill
Newmains
Shotts
Viewpark
Wishaw

Q Division
Abington
Biggar
Blackwood
Blantyre
Carluke
Carnwath
Carstairs
Crawford
Crossford
Douglas
East Kilbride
Forth
Hamilton
High Blantyre
Lanark
Larkhall
Law
Leadhills
Lesmahagow
Rigside
Shawsburn
Stonehouse
Strathaven
Uddingston

R Division
Auchinleck
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Ballantrae
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U Division
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Brodick
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Kilbirnie
Kilmarnock
Kilwinning
Lamlash
Largs
Millport
Newmilns
Saltcoats
Skelmorlie
Stewarton
West Kilbride

X Division
Gourock
Greenock
Inverkip
Kilmacolm
Port Glasgow

TAYSIDE POLICE

Manned Police Stations in 1979—47
Manned Police Stations in 1986—49

1979
Police HQ, Dundee

Eastern Division
Arbroath
Brechin
Carnoustie
Edzell
Forfar
Friockheim
Glamis
Kirriemuir
Letham
Montrose
Newtyle

Central Division
Dundee:
Ardler
Birkhill
Broughty Ferry
Dalfield
Fintry
Harbour
Hill Street
Kirkton
Lochee
Longforgan
Maryfield
Menzieshill
Happyhillock
Monifieth
Overgate
Whitfield

Western Division
Aberfeldy
Abernethy
Alyth
Auchterarder
Bankfoot
Blairgowrie
Bridge of Earn
Comrie
Cowper Angus
Crieff
Dunkeld
Errol
Kinlock Rannoch
Kinross
Methven
Perth
Pitlochry
Scone
Stanley

1986
Police HQ, Dundee

Eastern Division
Arbroath
Brechin
Carnoustie
Edzell
Forfar
Prockhiem
Glamis
Kirriemuir
Letham
Montrose
Newtyle

Central Division
Dundee:
Ardler
Balunieffield
Broughty Ferry
Dalfield
Fintry
Harbour
Hill Street
Kirkton
Lochee
Longforgan
Maryfield
Menzieshill
Happyhillock
Monifieth
Overgate
Ryehill
Whitfield

Western Division
Aberfeldy
Abernethy
Alyth
Auchterarder
Bankfoot
Blairgowrie
Bridge of Earn
Comrie
Couper Angus
Crieff
Dunkeld
Errol
Kinloch Rannoch
Kinross
Methven
Perth
Pitlochry
Scone
Stanley

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the net contribution made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community in each calendar year since 1973; and if he will express the contribution over the entire period as an amount per day in pounds sterling.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 22 April, at columns *377-78*. The latest available figures for the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget for the period 1 January 1973 to 31 December 1986 is £7,772 million. This represents an average net payment of £1·52 million a day since accession.

Building Societies

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to make any changes to the income tax regulations for building societies.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Three minor changes will be made to the regulations which govern the building societies "composite rate" tax scheme. These changes will enable building societies to pay interest gross to depositors in the following limited circumstances:

On certificate of deposit of £50,000 or more with a duration of between one and five years.

On time deposits of £50,000 or more in a foreign currency.

On deposits by a subsidiary of a building society with its parent society.

The first two changes mean that the tax treatment of certificates of deposits and time deposits issued by a building society will mirror that which already applies to similar deposits with banks. The other change will ensure that interest paid by a building society to its subsidiary is treated in the same way as interest paid by a company to its subsidiary.

A statutory instrument will be laid before the House as soon as possible, and the changes will apply to interest paid on or after 1 June 1987.

Finance Bill

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make notes on those clauses of the Finance Bill to be taken in Committee of the Whole House available to right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. The appropriate notes on clauses were placed in the Vote Office earlier today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Historic Buildings Council

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the Historic Buildings Council for Northern Ireland to publish annual reports covering the years since 31 March 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: It is expected that a report covering the period since 31 March 1981 will be published during the course of this year.

DHSS (Accommodation)

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost to the taxpayer to maintain someone in Department of Health and Social Services accommodation in the Newry/Armagh area.

Mr. Needham: Information is not available in the form requested. The average gross costs in the year ended 31 March 1986 of maintaining someone in the various types of accommodation provided by the Southern Health and Social Services Board in Armagh/Dungannon and Newry/Mourne units of management are set out in the table. These exclude income, capital and central administration costs.

£—per resident week

	£
Childrens' Homes	264
Old Peoples' Homes	134
Hostels for Mentally Handicapped Persons	199
Home for Physically Handicapped Persons	231

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are living in Department of Health and Social Services accommodation in Newry urban area/Armagh urban area.

Mr. Needham: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The following figures show the number of people living in accommodation provided by health and social services boards, acting as agents of the Department of Health and Social Services at 31 December 1985. This includes homes and hostels for children in care, the elderly and mentally or physically handicapped people. The areas referred to are the health and social services units of management.

	Number
Armagh and Dungannon	209
Newry and Mourne	145

Housing

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses are to be built in the Newry urban housing area in 1987-88.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the first instance, but I understand from the chairman that in the 1987-88 financial year the Housing Executive expects to start 16 dwellings and to complete three dwellings in the Newry urban area.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are on the housing waiting list in Newry urban area.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by the chairman that at 28 February 1987 there were 371 applicants on the housing waiting list for the Newry urban area.

Mr. T. H. Kernohan (Successor)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made to appoint a successor to Mr. T. H. Kernohan in the offices of Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints.

Mr. Tom King: Her Majesty the Queen has approved the appointment of Dr. M. N. Hayes, who is retiring from his post as permanent secretary of the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services, to succeed Mr. T. H. Kernohan in both posts with effect from 9 July this year.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Food Additives

57. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the adequacy of testing procedures for food additives; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. The independent expert committees that advices the Government on the health aspects of food additives has produced guidelines on the types of tests and information it requires and on the way in which particular tests should be conducted. The committees advises us that these tests provide the best means currently available to provide the data concerning the likely health effects of food additives.

Hearing Aids (Batteries)

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the hearing centre at Dudley road hospital in Birmingham is supplying batteries imported from Switzerland for use in hearing aids.

Mr. Major: Contracts for the supply of hearing aid batteries are held by a number of manufacturers. An international company based in Switzerland was awarded one of the contracts, to supply a quantity of mercury "button cell" batteries, as a result of competitive tendering carried out according to the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade code on Government procurement. The majority of mercury "button cell" batteries are supplied to the National Health Service by manufacturers in the United Kingdom and the National Health Service will continue to encourage competitive United Kingdom sources of supply.

Familial Hypercholesterolaemia

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to publicise to the medical profession the need to screen and identify those at risk from coronary heart disease due to an inherited condition known as familial hypercholesterolaemia.

Mrs. Currie: Familial hypercholesterolaemia is the commonest inherited hyperlipidaemia (surplus of fatty substances in the blood). People suffering from this condition show an increased risk of heart attack and sometimes strokes, at an early age. They often also show certain distinctive clinical signs and a family history of the condition. It is for the clinicians responsible for the care of such patients to initiate whatever tests they consider appropriate but there is no professional or scientific consensus on the need for general population screening at this time.

In view of recent publications in the medical press and of the excellent work being carried out by the voluntary organisations in this field it is not considered necessary to undertake further publicity.

Familial Hyperlipidaemia

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make available to the public a fact sheet on familial hyperlipidaemia giving information on how and where blood-tests can be taken for people with a family history of heart or blood-fat problems.

Mrs. Currie: I understand such fact sheets are available from the Family Heart Association. There is continuing research in this field, the results of which are made available to doctors. Estimates of blood lipid concentrations are available from National Health Service pathology laboratories when indicated on clinical grounds.

Pensioners

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent pensioners, in receipt of a supplementary pension, can apply for financial assistance to pay for locks and other protection to their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: There is no specific provision in the supplementary benefit scheme for single payments for locks or other security devices. Help is available exceptionally under the regulation 30 "fall-back" provision. This allows a single payment to be made if it is the only means of avoiding serious risk to health or safety. Whether the "fall-back" provision would apply in an individual case is a matter for the independent adjudicating authorities to decide.

Patient Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1985 for each region and for England as a whole the number of deaths and discharges among, and the number of beds occupied on 31 December by, patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service; and if he will break down these figures into the categories of *(a)* medical *(b)* surgical, *(c)* pre-convalescent and post-operative, *(d)* convalescent, *(e)* geriatric, *(f)* diseases of the chest, *(g)* maternity, *(h)* mental illness, *(i)* mental handicap, *(j)* rehabilitation, *(k)* terminal care and *(l)* others.

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service in-patients received treatment in private hospitals in the last year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 14 January 1987 c. *207-210*]: I regret that the average daily bed occupation figures given for specialties in South-West Thames and Oxford regional health authorities were incorrect. Amended figures are as follows together with revised totals for England.

Patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service in 1985

Specialty	*Average daily bed occupation*
England	
Medical	55·5
Surgical	180·7
Pre-convalescent and post-operative	5·3
Convalescent	235·0
Geriatric	736·0
Diseases of the chest	47·7
Maternity	9·6
Mental Illness	173·5
Mental handicap	626·3
Rehabilitation	71·3
Terminal care	333·5
Others	466·7
Totals	2,941·1
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	
Medical	11·9
Surgical	9·7
Pre-convalescent and post-operative	5·3
Convalescent	1·4
Geriatric	104·6
Diseases of the chest	42·6
Maternity	—
Mental Illness	2·3
Mental handicap	41·0
Rehabilitation	0·5
Terminal care	40·6
Others	146·5
Totals	406·4
Oxford Regional Health Authority	
Medical	—
Surgical	—
Pre-convalescent and post-operative	—
Convalescent	—
Geriatric	—
Diseases of the chest	—
Maternity	—
Mental Illness	26·9
Mental handicap	1·0
Rehabilitation	—
Terminal care	—
Others	9·8
Totals	37·7

TRANSPORT

Safety at Sea

56. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department is taking to improve safety at sea.

Mr. Moore: My Department has a wide range of measures in hand to promote safety at sea. As I have announced today in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), my Department has today placed a contract with Bristow Helicopters Ltd. for the provision of a new Her Majesty's Coastguard search and rescue helicopter at Stornaway which will enhance search and rescue coverage on the north-west coast of Scotland; Her Majesty's Coastguard is extending its VHF direction finding network and is being provided with other equipment to improve communications with vessels in distress; consultations are proceeding on new safety requirements for fishing vessels following the Safety at Sea Act; new standards for lifesaving appliances for certain types of vessel will shortly be proposed; safety inspections of United Kingdom and foreign vessels in United Kingdom ports are continuing at a high level; and my officials are pursuing a range of initiatives within the International Maritime Organisation, all designed to promote greater safety at sea.

In addition, as I informed the House on 9 March, my Department has embarked on a programme of checks on roll-on/roll-of ships, and these checks will be repeated at six-monthly intervals, The formal investigation into the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise opens on Monday.

When it reports, I shall give most urgent and serious consideration to its recommendations. If, as the investigation proceeds, it becomes clear that measures ought to be taken before the inquiry process has been completed, I shall not hesitate to do so.

Roll-on/Roll-off Ferries

Mr. Peter Rees asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans for further measures to improve the safety of roll-on/roll-off ferries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: As I informed the House on 9 March, my Department has embarked on a programme of checks on roll-on/roll-off ships, and these checks will be repeated at six-monthly intervals.

The formal investigation into the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise opens on Monday. When it reports, I shall give most urgent and serious consideration to its recommendations. If, as the Investigation proceeds, it becomes clear that measures ought to be taken before the inquiry process has been completed, I shall not hesitate to do so.

Buyouts

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, when a local management buyout is being contemplated for a National Bus Council subsidiary, it will be possible for a mortgage charge to be accepted in support of the payment.

Mr. David Mitchell: Those who provide finance for buyouts will form their own judgments on what security they need for their loans, and neither the National Bus Company nor the Government have any objection to a subsidiary's assets being mortgaged for that purpose. Moreover, where bids for National Bus Company subsidiaries, whether from managers or third parties, do not reflect the possible alternative use value of property, the NBC is prepared to consider selling the subsidiary subject to a mortgage charge under which further proceeds become due only if the property is resold or developed.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the Zeebrugge disaster, he has any plans to review the regulations governing the carriage of hazardous or toxic wastes on passenger ferries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The conditions under which dangerous goods may be carried at sea are contained in the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1981 as amended and the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code. These conditions are subject to continual review both nationally and internationally and any lessons to be learnt from the Zeebrugge disaster will certainly be taken into account.

Mhari L

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to order the disentanglement of the wreck of the Mhari L from the undersea cable.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Northern Region

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many enforcement officers are engaged by the Northern traffic commissioners to monitor the running of public transport provision within its areas; and how many such enforcement officers are allocated to Cleveland county traffic area.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Newcastle office of the north-eastern traffic area has nine traffic examiners to serve the various enforcement needs of the Department and to assist the traffic commissioner in carrying out his functions; four of these examiners are permanently based in Darlington and their responsibilities include the county of Cleveland. In addition the traffic commissioner can use the traffic area office administrative staff to support him in his statutory duties.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of reports on public transport operation within the Northern traffic region submitted by enforcement officers since effective deregulation; and how many such reports relate to public bus services within the Cleveland county traffic area.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Transport Act 1985 does not require formal reporting on public transport services. Where complaints are received by a traffic commissioner it is for him to decide whether any further investigation or action is called for. Any resulting reports to him by his staff are confidential.

Helicopter Rescue (Scotland)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *627-28*, what further progress has been made in setting a date for the establishment of a search and rescue helicopter in north-west Scotland.

Mr. Moore: My Department has today placed a contract with Bristow Helicopters Ltd. for the provision of a search and rescue helicopter to be based at Stornoway. The helicopter will be a Sikorsky S61N Mk II aircraft, the civil equivalent of the military Westland Sea King. It is expected to be on station at Stornoway in early May.

Sea Passengers (Compensation)

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has reached a decision, following the consultation announced by his hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for aviation, on 25 March, on increasing the limit on compensation for death or injury of sea passengers carried by United Kingdom carriers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes. Following consultations I have decided to increase the limit from its present figure of £38,173 to around £80,000.

The statutory instrument necessary will use a figure of 1,525,000 gold francs, because limits under the Athens convention are at present expressed in gold francs. The conversion rate from gold francs to sterling is adjusted from time to time; using the current sterling-SDR rate, the sterling equivalent of 1,525,000 gold francs is £80,009.

I intend to press for an increase in the limits in the Athens convention, and to keep the United Kingdom limit under review.

The new limit will come into effect on 1 June.

ENVIRONMENT

Agricultural Land

53. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State of the Environment if he will make a statement on the loss of agricultural land to housing development.

Mr. Waldegrave: The transfer of agricultural land to urban uses, including housing, is dealt with in the publication "Rural Enterprise and Development" issued on 10 March. The rate of transfer of farmland has fallen from over 15,000 hectares a year before 1975 to less than 5,000 hectares a year in England and Wales in the period 1980 to 1985. That recent rate is not expected to change significantly as a result of the adjustments to planning policy proposed in the draft circular "Development involving Agricultural Land".

Recording of changes in the use of land by Ordnance Survey, introduced in 1985, shows that under half of the land used for new housing in England is transferred from farmland. About 45 per cent. of the land developed for housing is on derelict, redeveloped or unused land in urban areas.

Right to Repairs Scheme

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of tenants who have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received payment for repairs carried out under the right to repairs scheme; and what is the total cost of payments under the scheme.

Mr. Tracey: Provisional estimates are that about 800 applications under the right to repair scheme were submitted to English local authorities in 1986, of which 80 were accepted. In about 310 cases the landlord elected to carry out the repair within 28 days, 270 were rejected as outside the scheme and another 110 for other reasons. During the year, about 45 claims for payment were received by the authorities and 40 of these were agreed for a total of around £4,000.

Grant-related Expenditure

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the local authority associations on developing grant-related expenditure assessments for local authorities personal social services expenditure; what steps he has taken to ensure that personal social services grant-related expenditures reflect need; and what proposals he has to develop personal social services grant-related expenditures in the future.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987]: The Secretary of State discussed the 1987 development programme for grant-related expenditure assessments with local authority representatives in the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 2 April. Proposals for development work on personal social service GREAs were put forward by the Association of County Councils and jointly by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of London Authorities. However, as the Secretary of State indicated at that meeting, he does not propose to set up a group to review personal social service GREAs this year. In conjunction with the local authority associations research is proceeding on the GREA for children's services but we do not expect results from this to be available in time for the 1988-89 RSG settlement.

Housing Trusts

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department takes to ensure that the allocation of properties by housing trusts complies with the aims and policies of equal opportunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987]: To qualify for public funds, housing trusts must register with the Housing Corporation, which issues guidance to ensure that allocations, which are made primarily on the basis of need, do not discriminate against particular groups.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Catering Craft Courses

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make a statement on the standard of the catering craft courses in those universities and colleges which undertake such courses;

(2) if he has any plans to improve craft training in hotel and catering courses in those universities and colleges which organise craft training courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Hotel and catering courses at craft level are part of the non-advanced further education provision and are not offered in universities. The standard of courses provided in colleges in England and Wales as described in the report of the survey carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate, "NAFE in practice", published on 8 April 1987 which includes a section on hotel and catering courses. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

The report says that NAFE has responded well to the needs of the hotel and catering and baking industry by providing a wide range of appropriate vocational courses all of which offer nationally recognised qualifications. Over 84 per cent. of the classes seen in the 34 colleges included in the survey were satisfactory, including 24 per cent. which were good. Students achieved particularly good standards in practical work.

The Department has no specific proposals for improvements in craft training in hotel and catering although, as with other craft courses, we are concerned that standards should not only be maintained but raised where possible.

Last year the NAB recommended and my right hon. Friend accepted an increase of 359 places on advanced hotel and catering courses. This represented an increase of 16 per cent., the greatest planned increase in any academic area for 1987-88.

School Closures and Amalgamations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list showing, for each recent year, and for each set of proposals for the closure or amalgamation of schools that he has refused *(a)* the name of the local education authority, *(b)* the age

range of children concerned, *(c)* the date that the authority first considered the closure of any school identified for closure in the set of proposals, *(d)* the dates of public consultation on the proposals, *(e)* the date of receipt of the proposals by his Department, *(f)* the approximate number of children in the schools identified for closure, *(g)* the date of refusal and *(h)* whether or not a replacement set of proposals has been approved subsequently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available on *(c)*, *(d)*, *(f)* and *(h)*. The following table gives the available information on closure or amalgamation proposals which were rejected by my right hon. Friend or his predecessor in 1985 and 1986.

LEA	*Proposal*	*Date statutory proposal published*	*Date rejected*
Wakefield	Closure of Tithe Barn First School and change in the age range of ten other schools	20 October 1983	14 January 1985
Liverpool	Closure of Blue Coat Secondary School	22 October 1984	12 March 1985
Lancashire	Amalgation of Castle Secondary School and Greaves Secondary School	25 April 1984	20 February 1985
Staffordshire	Closure of Weston Road High School	28 September 1984	4 April 1985
Merton	Amalgamation of Eastfields High School, Willows High School and Rowan High School	5 July 1984	15 April 1985
ILEA	Amalgamation of St. Edmunds Secondary School and St. Thomas More Secondary School	23 November 1984	12 August 1985
Nottinghamshire	Closure of Merrivale Nursery School	12 September 1984	3 April 1985
Barnsley	Amalgamation of St. Matthews Infant School and Kier Street Junior School	2 November 1984	13 May 1985
Wolverhampton	Reorganisation of Secondary Schools: Closure of four schools including one grammar school and change age range of 10 schools to 11-16 from 11-18 as well as establish two Tertiary Colleges	9 January 1985	25 November 1985
ILEA	Amalgamation of Cardinal Manning Secondary School and Sion Manning Secondary School	23 November 1984	12 August 1985
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Closure of St. Mary's RC Primary School	13 January 1986	23 June 1986
Coventry	Closure of Stivichall Junior School	21 June 1985	16 April 1986
Kirklees	Amalgamation of Heckmondwike Grammar, Heckmondwike Secondary and Liversedge Secondary Schools	6 June 1985	9 May 1986
Gloucestershire	Reorganisation of secondary schools in Gloucester City: closure of eleven schools including five grammar and establishment of six secondary schools	30 November 1984	24 March 1986
Avon	Closure of Beechen Cliff Secondary School for Boys	10 September 1984	9 May 1986
Bolton	Closure of Fourgates County Primary	23 August 1985	12 June 1986
Trafford	Amalgamation of St. Mary's, Cardinal Vaughan and St. Paul's RC Secondary Schools	6 December 1985	17 September 1986
Dorset	Amalgamation of Sherborne Lord Digby's and Sherborne Foster's Grammar Schools to form Sherborne Aldhelm's Secondary Modern	16 November 1984	25 March 1986
Gloucestershire	Reorganisation of secondary schools in Stroud: Closure of five schools including two grammar schools and establishment of four comprehensive schools	15 November 1984	24 March 1986
Devon	Reorganisation of comprehensive schools: closure of 12 and establishment of four secondary schools	19 March 1984	25 February 1986

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list showing for each set of proposals for the closure or amalgamation of schools that he is currently considering *(a)* the name of the local education authority, *(b)* the age range of children concerned, *(c)* the date that the authority first considered the closure of any school identified for closure in the set of proposals, *(d)* the date of public consultation on the proposals, *(e)* the date of receipt of the proposals by his Department and *(f)* the approximate number of children in the schools identified for closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what number of sets of proposals for the closure or amalgamation of schools approved by him since the publication of "Better Schools," Cmnd. 9496, have not met the guidance given on minimum size of schools contained in paragraphs 273 and 275; what number of such approvals there have been for primary schools; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what number of sets of proposals for the closure or amalgamation of schools approved by him since the publication of the 1981 circular "Falling Rolls and Surplus Places" have not met the guidance given on minimum size of schools, as repeated in paragraph 273 of "Better Schools" Cmnd. 9469; what number of such approvals there have been for primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information has been received by his Department in recent years regarding schemes for school closures or amalgamation as to *(a)* the length of time since the local education authority first considered any part of the scheme and *(b)* the effects and

consequences during that time on any school provisionally identified for closure, in particular changes in capital spending and pupil numbers; what studies have been made on any adverse effects which might occur during a lengthy period of uncertainty about the future of a school; what steps he has taken to mitigate any such effects and consequences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The information at *(a)* and *(b)* is not available. It is for local education authorities to consider the timing and consequences of any statutory proposals for closing or amalgamating schools; no studies have been made of these matters. My right hon. Friend has given an undertaking that once proposals have been made he will use his best endeavours to reach a decision within six months of their publication unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Educational Support Grant

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to extend the educational support grant for teaching mathematics in schools beyond March 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend expects to invite the views of the local authority associations on proposals for a programme of education support grants for the 1988-89 financial year shortly.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Butter

3. **Mr. Torney** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the quantity and the value in sterling of United Kingdom-produced butter going into intervention in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: In the 12 months up to December 1986 the United Kingdom bought in 90,646 tonnes at a cost of nearly £174 million.

Alternative Land Use

9. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received concerning his published plans for alternative land uses; and if he will make a statement.

43. **Mr. Beith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about his farming and rural enterprise proposals.

Mr. Jopling: I have received a number of representations from interested organisations and private individuals. In general these new initiatives have been welcomed.

Fishing Vessels

10. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on decommissioning grants for fishing vessels.

Mr. Gummer: Following consultation with the industry I hope to make an announcement shortly on whether we should continue to operate a decommissioning grants scheme for fishing vessels.

Fishing Industry

42. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the shore side infrastructure of the fishing industry.

Mr. Gummer: Responsibility for harbour infrastructure rests with individual harbour authorities. However grants towards harbour improvements, of benefit to the fishing industry, are available under the provisions of section 2 of the Fisheries Act 1955.

Community assistance is also available for marketing and processing in the fisheries sector and for improved port facilities under Regulations EC/355/77 and EC/4028/86 respectively.

Food Aid

15. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on the operation in the United Kingdom of the European Community food aid scheme for the needy.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a number of letters from hon. Members, Members of the European Parliament and others about particular aspects of the scheme, which has now ended. Replies are being sent in the usual way.

16. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to which local authorities have been involved in the distribution of European Economic Community free food.

Mr. Gummer: I know from correspondence received in my Department that a number of local authorities have been involved in various ways in these distributions. However comprehensive information has not been compiled.

24. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are any plans for the extension or repetition of the European Economic Community food aid scheme.

Mr. Gummer: The scheme came to an end in the United Kingdom at the end of March. Any repetition of the scheme would be a matter for the Commission: I know of no proposal at present.

26. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the amount of surplus European Economic Community butter, cheese and beef distributed to people entitled to receive it in Birmingham.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 11 March to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

33. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest information as to how many individuals have received free food under the European Economic Community food aid scheme.

Mr. Gummer: I do not have this information.

41. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his most recent information as to the amounts of cereal products distributed under the European Economic Community food aid scheme in the United Kingdom and other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Gummer: No cereal products were distributed in the United Kingdom under this scheme. The United Kingdom had no intervention stocks of milling wheat. Provisional information from the European Commission indicates deliveries in other member states totalling 11,680 tonnes of flour and 2,400 tonnes of semolina.

45. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the operation in the United Kingdom of the European Community food aid scheme for the needy.

Mr. Gummer: I have nothing to add to earlier statements on the operation of this scheme, which came to an end in the United Kingdom at the end of March.

Dairy Products

17. **Mr. Adley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives he plans to increase United Kingdom consumption of dairy products.

Mr. Gummer: The Government's aim is to encourage the improvement of marketing in the dairy sector through support for Food from Britain. We are encouraging renewed efforts by the MMB and we shall continue to ensure that consumers have sufficient information and choice to make their own decisions about a healthy and balanced diet in which dairy products should take a proper place.

North Norway Cod Fishery

18. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he makes of the implications for United Kingdom fishing interests of the current licensing arrangements for the north Norway cod fishery.

Mr. Gummer: I am satisfied that the licensing arrangements covering the North Norway cod fishery safeguard the interests of the British fishing industry.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

19. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future operation of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the United Kingdom in the light of discussions in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: The normal autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands later this year will as necessary take account of the various decisions of the Council including the new options regarding the operation of the hill livestock compensatory allowances. As our recent policy document "Farming UK" makes clear, the Government will continue to provide appropriate support to meet the special needs of the hills and uplands.

Green Pound

20. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his policy on the future valuation of the green pound; and when this matter is to be discussed by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Jopling: In the course of the forthcoming price-fixing, the Government will be seeking an outcome on the green pound which is equitable to United Kingdom farmers, traders and consumers.

44. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Council of Ministers on the current value of the green pound.

Mr. Jopling: I told the 30-31 March meeting of the Council of Ministers that the Government would finalise their position on the devaluation of the green pound at a later stage in the negotiations.

51. **Mr. Marland** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effects of a devaluation in the green pound on United Kingdom farmers.

Mr. Jopling: A devaluation of the green pound would reduce United Kingdom MCAs and raise agricultural support prices and United Kingdom farm income. It would also tend to increase feed costs and consumer prices for food and add to Community budget costs and United Kingdom public expenditure.

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received concerning the value of the green pound.

Mr. Jopling: I have received a substantial number of such representations.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the average percentage difference between the value of the pound sterling and the green rate for the pound sterling for each six months period since January 1979.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987]: The information is not available in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Monetary compensatory amounts reflect the difference between sterling's market rate and green rates. The following table shows the monetary compensatory amount percentages for beef and cereals during the first week in each six months period since 1979 as well as the latest figures available:

Date (week commencing)	*Monetary compensatory amount (percentage)*	
	Beef	*Cereals*
1 January 1979	−27·0	−27·0
2 July 1979	−6·0	−17·6
7 January 1980	−3·5	−9·0
7 July 1980	+1·7	−1·0
5 January 1981	+12·1	+12·1
6 July 1981	+12·3	+12·3
4 January 1982	+8·0	+8·0
5 July 1982	+9·6	+9·6
3 January 1983	+1·4	+1·4
4 July 1983	+5·2	+5·2
2 January 1984	+7·6	+7·6
2 July 1984	+1·0	+3·9
6 January 1985	−1·9	−1·9
1 July 1985	+3·6	+3·6
6 January 1986	−3·5	−3·5
7 July 1986	−7·7	−8·9
5 January 1987	−18·4	−26·3
27 April 1987	−16·4	−24·1

Pigs

21. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the prospects for the pig sector.

Mr. Gummer: The increase in export refunds and introduction of aids to private storage have strengthened the United Kingdom pig market in recent weeks. The future prospects for our pig industry will depend upon its ability to balance supply and demand for pigmeat, to expand its share of the domestic market for bacon and other pigmeat products and to increase exports.

Rhizomania

22. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's most recent consultations on measures to contain rhizomania in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My officials held a very useful meeting on 6 April with representatives of trade and producer organisations about my proposal for statutory controls on the disposal to land of waste from the processing of imported potatoes and other vegetables. The possible reduction of the soil tolerance allowed on imported potatoes was also discussed. Further meetings are being arranged with representatives of some of the individual sectors concerned. I look forward to a positive outcome of these discussions.

Poultry (Salmonella)

23. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of poultry sold in the United Kingdom are infested with salmonella; what processes are currently used to eliminate this bacteria; and what new techniques are currently being investigated by his Department with a view to use in the future.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is not uncommon for salmonella organisms to be present in poultry. Statutory hygiene controls apply at every stage of production and manufacture to reduce salmonella infection in live birds and poultrymeat and in animal protein intended for livestock feed. My Department is continuously seeking ways of further reducing the incidence of infection.

Hedgerows

25. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the number and length of hedgerows which have been removed and of new hedgerows which have been planted with public support since 1982.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. Grants for hedge removal were abolished in 1976 except where this was ancillary to drainage work. Grants of this kind remained available until 1983. United Kingdom expenditure on them since 1982 has been £10·13 million.

Separate statistics on expenditure on grants for hedge planting and laying (with associated gates) are only available from 1985. Since then United Kingdom expenditure has been £2·0 million on total investment of £3·9 million.

Agricultural Support

27. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current net cost of agricultural support in cash terms and as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Jopling: I refer to the reply given to my hon. Friend on 16 March.

Food Additives

28. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria govern the listing of food additives on the labels of food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: All food additives that perform a technological function in the final food must be shown on the labels of pre-packaged foods in the list of ingredients. The information must show the function that the additive performs in the food by specified category followed by the specific name of the additive or its approved serial number (or both). At present flavourings only have to be shown under their category name. Non pre-packed foods need declare in a label or notice only the main categories of additives present.

Bees

29. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received over the importing of bees into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the past year, my Department has received 17 letters about importing bees into this country. Seven of these sought a temporary relaxation of our bee import controls following the bad weather in 1986; the remainder sought assurance that there would be no relaxation.

The purpose of these controls is to safeguard bee health in this country and particularly to keep our varroasis. The regulations are shortly to be extended to control the import of bee pests. I have no plans to relax the controls.

Beef

30. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new proposals he has to assist the beef producing sector of agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: The reforms in the Community beef regime that were agreed under the United Kingdom presidency began to apply from 6 April. Under these, the Commission has scope to propose measures to deal with particular developments in the market. I will be ready to press the Commission to ensure that the United Kingdom market is supported if any undue weakness emerges. Meanwhile, producers continue to benefit from the beef variable premium scheme, worth about £120 million in 1986-87, and suckler cow premium scheme, worth about £28 million. Upland beef producers also benefit from hill livestock compensatory allowances worth around £50 million this year.

40. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the prospects for the beef industry.

Mr. Jopling: The reforms of the beef regime agreed in December came into effect on 6 April. Reliance on intervention is generally being reduced but the Commission has the scope to institute extra support measures if the market is unduly weak. Meanwhile, the beef variable premium scheme has been secured until 31 December 1988. There is scope to increase the suckler cow

premium by 35 per cent. to over £33 per head. Upland beef producers will also benefit from hill livestock compensatory allowances. In addition, the Community has recognised that beef producers will be affected by measures taken in the milk sector. The Commission has estimated that expenditure on aids for private storage and export refunds in the beef sector will as a result rise by 435 mecu over the next two years.

Cereals

31. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding cereal surpluses.

Mr. Gummer: I continue to receive representations from a large number of sources about the need to take action to control the over-production of cereals.

Fishing Fleet

32. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what forecasts the Government have made regarding the future of the United Kingdom's fishing fleet.

Mr. Gummer: The future of the fleet will depend upon decisions taken by individual fishermen. They will take account of the available fishing opportunities and the recently agreed 10-year Fisheries Structures Regulation 4028/86 which will provide a basis for new investment in the industry.

In addition, I hope shortly to be able to make an announcement on a new capital grant scheme.

Processed Foods (Fat Content)

34. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to introduce regulations relating to the fat content of processed foods.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have already circulated for public comment detailed proposals on the fat content labelling of foods. We are considering those comments and are involved in discussion with the European Commission at official level about the proposals.

Organic Farming

35. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to encourage organic farming in Britain.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As described in "Farming UK" which was published by Agriculture Ministers on 10 March my Department is consulting the industry on the setting of production standards. In addition, the agricultural advisory services are equipping themselves to respond to demand for specialised advice from those producing organic food. Organic growers also benefit from the Department's overall research programme, which includes topics such as nitrogen fixation and biological control, as well as specific projects on organic farming.

Farm Incomes

36. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to improve the real level of farm incomes.

Mr. Jopling: The Government's policy of promoting a better balance in the CAP between supply and demand for surplus commodities and controlling CAP expenditure, while offering increased opportunities for enterprise in rural areas, offers the best prospect for the longer term viability of the agriculture industry.

Milk Quotas

37. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements have been agreed for the leasing of milk quotas for 1987-88.

Mr. Jopling: The European Commission have expressed serious doubts about the legality of our quota leasing arrangements. I am trying hard to change their minds on this and am in direct communication with the Commission on the problem.

52. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he will give to the Milk Marketing Board over the allocation of milk for manufacturing purposes following the introduction of the quota system.

Mr. Gummer: The arrangements for making milk available to buyers are a matter for the joint committee of the Milk Marketing Board and the Dairy Trade Federation to negotiate in accordance with the milk marketing scheme and relevant provisions of Community law.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is transferring milk quota bought under the outgoers' scheme from England to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987]: As I announced to the House on 31 March we are making an adjustment to the distribution of United Kingdom quota which involves the transfer of 30,000 tonnes from Great Britain to Northern Ireland with effect from 1 April 1987. It is hoped that this quota can be bought up under a national outgoers scheme, which we plan to open shortly, but in order to ensure that the required quota is available a provisional quota reduction of about 0·3 per cent. is being made.

Sheep Farmers

38. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current prospects for sheep farmers.

Mr. Gummer: The sheep sector remains strong. Our breeding flock continues to expand steadily and our exports increased by 27 per cent. in 1986. My aim will be to ensure that the sector remains competitive and that sheep production can continue to play its important role, particularly in the economy of the hills and uplands.

Timber

39. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will say what effect he estimates his Department's published plans for encouraging woodlands will have on future timber import requirements.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is estimated that by the end of the next decade some 20-25 per cent. of our timber needs will be met from existing woodlands. The planting

programmes now envisaged will further reduce our dependence on imports in the course of time, but it is not possible to put a precise figure on this as much will depend on long term levels of demand.

Tributyltin

46. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning his decision to refer the use of tributyltin to the Pesticide Advisory Committee; and if he will make a statement as to the committee's progress.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received a range of representations on this subject. The Advisory Committee considered the use of tribulyltin in the aquatic environment on 16 April and recommended that when antifouling paints are brought within the scope of the Food and Environment Protection Act on 1 July this year, products containing TBT should not be granted approval for use on small vessels or fish farming apparatus.

Common Agricultural Policy

47. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of dairy farming within the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: The outlook for dairy farming was poor before the package of measures adopted by the council last December, because of the threat posed to the support system by steeply rising surpluses. I believe that the industry now has much better prospects. The Community will soon need to consider the measures to follow the current quota system from 1989, and in discussion of them I will continue to seek better control of surplus production, through measures that respond to the needs of United Kingdom producers, traders and consumers.

Farm Produce (World Prices)

48. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the effect on agricultural employment of world prices for United Kingdom farmers' produce.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Employment in agriculture is influenced by many factors such as agricultural prices, the level of costs, investment, changes in technology and general economic conditions in the country. I have no reliable estimate of the effect of the kind of hypothetical circumstance envisaged.

Farm Businesses

49. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers went out of business in 1986; how many new farming businesses were started; and what was the net effect on the total number of farms.

Mr. Donald Thompson: These figures are not available. Data are not collected in a form which would allow the presentation of information on the basis requested.

Nutritional Labelling

50. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to issue guidelines on nutritional labelling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No, but I hope to make a further announcement shortly.

Biotechnology

Mr. Gregory asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the development of biotechnology designed to utilise agricultural and dairy products to the maximum.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department supports a wide ranging programme of research which exploits the potential of biotechnology across the agricultural, fisheries and food sectors. The aim of this programme is to improve product quality, develop novel products, improve production systems and combat animal and plant disease. Biotechnological work sponsored by my Department has an annual cost of around £7 million. Within this programme we are constantly alert to the possibility of developing cost-effective methods for greater utlilisation of agricultural products.

EC (Food Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of food, by commodity, and wine exported from the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in the comparable annual period 10 and 15 years previously.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested for 1976 and 1986 is set out in the table. Comparable information is not readily available for years prior to 1976.

European Community[1] exports to the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc

thousand tonnes

	To Soviet Union		*To Eastern bloc[2]*	
	1976	*1986*	*1976*	*1986*
Wheat	..	4,990	755	623
Barley	439	1,510	330	811
Wheatflour	..	..	..	8
Rice	..	..	15	7
Malt	98	0	48	..
WMP	4	10	0	5
SMP	20	0	5	1
Cond. milk	0	..	0	..
Butter (including butteroil)	0	105	1	18
Beef and veal[3]	24	141	23	70
Pigmeat[3]	..	..	..	1
Poultry[3]	18	23	..	..
Raw sugar (converted to white equivalent)	52	7	0	..
Refined sugar	185	..	15	..
Olive oil	0	12	0	..
Wine	..	4	18	130

[1] 1976—EC9, 1986—EC12;
[2] German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania;
[3] Beef, veal, pigmeat and poultrymeat are deadweight.
.. denotes trade under 500 tonnes.
Source: EUROSTAT.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the price at which butter, beef and sugar, respectively, were made available to

traders, after the payment of export refund, to the Soviet Union, expressed in pounds sterling per pound, at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Quarantine Kennels

Miss Fookes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the enforcement of the rule that no quarantine kennels should be left unattended at any time.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The statutory rabies controls do not require that approved quarantine premises should be constantly attended. However conditions of authorisation require the premises to be secure at all times and that certain welfare standards are met under the regular supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon.

Fish Catches (Reporting System)

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to improve the speed and accuracy of the fish catch reporting system.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are proceeding with the further introduction of microcomputers into the port offices of the sea fisheries inspectorates which together with the re-organisation of the Inspectorates should lead to further improvements in the speed and accuracy of the fish catch reporting system.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 24 April 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 6 April, *Official Report*, column 1, what information the Director of Public Prosecutions has as to the reasons for the length of the police inquiries concerning the possible prosecution of Lord Rothschild under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act; if the police have given the Director of Public Prosecutions any indication as to when those inquiries are likely to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The police inquiries have necessarily been lengthy and complicated. Unfortunately, these had not been completed when the officer in charge of the case had to undertake an entirely separate task. However, the Director of Public Prosecutions now expects to receive an interim report from the Metropolitan police by the end of next week.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Free Ports

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Her Majesty's Customs and Excise review of the free ports procedures has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The main work of the review has been completed and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise will submit its report to me shortly.

EC Budget

Mr. Rowe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the European Commission's latest cash position and the implications for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: The European Commission estimates that its spending obligations this month will again exceed available revenues under the budget for 1987.

The Commission therefore requested member states to advance from May into April the payment of own resources other than VAT in accordance with article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77: a similar advance was made last month. The Government are satisfied that this request is within the vires of article 10(2) and accordingly made an advance payment on 21 April of £150 million from the Consolidated Fund under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972. The payment of levies and duties on 20 May will be reduced by the amount of the advance.

The Commission has also informed us that it has had to overdraw its accounts with members states in April in accordance with article 12(2) of Council regulation 2891/77. The amount involved for the United Kingdom is expected to be of the order of £155 million. The Government are meeting this obligation from the Consolidated Fund in accordance with section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972. Repayment of drawings made under this facility will be made by deduction from our May own resources payments.

Neither of these facilities involves increasing the total amounts which the Community is authorised to spend during 1987. There is therefore no net addition to public expenditure.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for East Berkshire, *Official Report*, 8 April, column *261*, he will place a draft of the Value Added Tax (Cash Accounting) Regulations in the Library.

Mr. Brooke: A copy has been placed in the Library today.

Customs and Immigration

Mr. Snape asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions Her Majesty's Government are having about the extent to which the Channel tunnel international passenger train service operated from 1993 should conform to European Economic Community customs and immigration formalities and about how this is to be achieved.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *576*]: None. Her Majesty's Government fully recognise that all customs and immigration formalities, including those for the Channel tunnel international train services to be operated from 1993, should conform to the requirements of relevant EC legislation in force at that time. In discussing any proposal for such legislation Her Majesty's Government will take full account of the special characteristics of the Channel tunnel services.

Mr. Snape asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what consideration his Department is giving to European Economic Community directives and proposals relevant to possible changes in customs and immigration formalities by the beginning of 1993; and what assessment he has made of their implications;

(2) what changes the European Commission has proposed for customs and immigration formalities for general passenger travel between European Economic Community member states, and between European Economic Community member states and other countries, by the beginning of 1993; and what changes at railway crossing points are implied in these proposals.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *576*]: There is a draft frontier controls directive under discussion which, if adopted, would provide for selective rather than comprehensive checks on Community nationals at land frontiers including at railway crossing points. It would expire in 1990. There are further proposals, also under discussion, for the introduction of common border posts for customs purposes at internal Community frontiers.

More generally the Commission has indicated in its document "completing the internal market" that it wishes to arrive at a stage whereby checks on entry are abolished

for Community citizens arriving from another Community country by 1992. Any proposal to that effect would be adopted only by unanimity.

It is not yet possible to make any realistic assessment of the implication of the above proposals which, for example, may be subject to changes arising from the discussions and negotiations.

No proposals for changes for passengers travelling between EC member states and other countries have been made.

Mr. Snape asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any customs and immigration checks for railway passengers travelling between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Eire are carried out on board moving trains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *576*]: No customs or immigration checks on railway passengers are carried out on board moving trains between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Snape asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what information he has as to which railway crossing points within the European Economic Community require customs or immigration formalities;

(2) what information he has as to which crossing points within the European Economic Community require customs or immigration formalities and, of those, which offer such formalities on board moving trains or trains on board ferries, and which offer such formalities on board long-distance passenger trains where customs or immigration staff undertake their work beyond stations adjacent to the member states border.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *576*]: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

Defence Estimates

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to publish the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987.

Mr. Younger: I intend to publish this year's "Statement on the Defence Estimates" on Wednesday, 6 May.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Embassy, Moscow

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement about security arrangements for the new British embassy in Moscow.

Mr. Eggar: No. It is not our practice to comment about security arrangements at diplomatic missions overseas.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to apply the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Major: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has similar legislation under consideration and the consultative procedures have begun.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Facsimile Service

Mr. Onslow asked the Lord Privy Seal if he has any plans to improve the present arrangements for the receipt of facsimile messages by right hon. and hon. Members at the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: I have no plans to improve the present arrangements. In May 1986 the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee examined the payments policy for the facsimile service and recommended that no changes be made. If my hon. Friend has a particular point in mind, perhaps he will write to me.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Visas

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for visas have been *(a)* made, *(b)* approved or *(c)* refused since the new arrangements were introduced in (i) Pakistan, (ii) India and (iii) Bangladesh.

Mr. Waddington: The information available centrally is given in the following table.

Applications in the Indian sub-continent for visas to the United Kingdom[1]

Number of persons

	Newly received[2]	*Applications Granted*[3]	*Refused initially*
Bangladesh			
1986 October[4] to December	3,820	2,920	870
1987 January, February	1,830	1,520	400
India			
1986 October[4] to December	21,590	20,130	720
1987 January, February	10,730	9,400	640
Pakistan			
1986 October[4] to December	13,650	11,540	1,050
1987 January, February	7,250	5,970	860

[1] For settlement or temporary purposes.
[2] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[3] Including applications granted on appeal.
[4] Including applications for entry clearance in the period 1 to 14 October 1986.

Electorate

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the most recent figure for the size of the electorate and the number of people in each category of persons unable to vote.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The total number of parliamentary electors on the 1987 United Kingdom electoral register,

details of which were published on 22 April in *OPCS Monitor* EL 87/1, is nearly 43,700,000. This figure includes about 700,000 persons who will attain the age of 18 during the currency of the register who are entitled to vote at an election only on or after their 18th birthday. It also includes persons temporarily ineligible to vote for part or all of the currency of the register, that is persons serving sentences of imprisonment, non-voluntary mental patients and persons found guilty of corrupt or illegal election practices during the past five years—estimates of their numbers are not available. The main groups of people resident in the United Kingdom who are ineligible to vote and who should not be on the electoral register, with estimates of their numbers, are:

British and Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Irish Republic aged under 18—12,600,000, excluding the 700,000 attainers on the register.

Foreign nationals, excluding citizens of the Irish Republic—700,000, 100,000 of whom are aged under 18.

Mr. John Cummisbey (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the letter from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, dated 24 February, regarding Mr. John Cummisbey, took seven weeks to answer.

Mr. Maller: The hon. Member's letter inquiring why his constituent had been transferred from Long Lartin prison to Gloucester prison was received by us on 3 March. Inquiries were necessary to establish the reasons for the transfer, but it should have been possible to reply by the end of March and I regret the additional delay.

SCOTLAND

Dog Excrement

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to announce the conclusions of the current review of the present legal provisions preventing dog excrement fouling public places.

Mr. Ancram: Consultation on this and other issues arising from a review of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 will commence as soon as possible. I cannot at this stage say when conclusions will be reached.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Brent

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish Her Majesty's Inspectorate's report on education in the London borough of Brent.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The report is being published today and copies have been placed in the Library. It shows that there are serious and deep-seated problems affecting education in Brent: the borough's education service has been gravely impaired by basic weaknesses of management and performance. I have asked the authority to take urgent and immediate action and to let me know by the end of June its action programme and timetable for dealing with the matters raised in the report so that those who live in Brent receive the sort of educational provision they are entitled to expect. I shall continue to monitor the position closely.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table grouping local education authorities into those controlled on 1 January 1986 by the Conservative party, those controlled by the Labour party, those controlled by the alliance parties and those with no overall control, showing for each authority, the average for each group and the overall average *(a)* the average primary school class size for January 1985 and January 1986, *(b)* the average secondary school class size for pupils under 14 in January 1985 and January 1986 and *(c)* the average secondary school class size for pupils over 14 in January 1985 and January 1986.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 April 1987, c. *427*]: The information requested for each local education authority in England for the years 1985 and 1986 is given in the following table. Authorities are grouped by the political control as at 1 January 1986. The analyses relate to classes taught by one teacher on a selected period within the day of the census count in January of each year and may not be representative of pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

	January 1985			*January 1986*		
LEA	*Average Class Size Primary Schools*	*Average Class Size for Pupils under 14 in Secondary Schools*	*Average Class Size for Pupils 14 and over in Secondary Schools*	*Average Class Size Primary Schools*	*Average Class Size for Pupils under 14 in Secondary Schools*	*Average Class Size for Pupils 14 and over in Secondary Schools*
England	24·9	23·6	17·5	25·5	23·5	17·6
Conservative						
Barnet	22·6	24·5	14·8	23·4	23·3	15·2
Berkshire	25·8	23·5	17·0	26·6	23·2	17·2
Bexley	25·9	23·9	17·8	26·3	24·7	17·0
Bromley	26·2	24·7	16·2	26·3	24·8	16·6
Buckinghamshire	26·7	23·7	17·9	27·6	23·4	17·9
Bury	24·7	23·9	16·4	25·7	24·1	17·1
Croydon	24·3	24·4	17·5	25·6	24·2	16·5
Dorset	26·5	24·7	17·6	26·6	24·1	17·9
Ealing	22·9	22·2	17·6	23·7	22·1	16·7
East Sussex	25·8	24·5	17·7	26·3	24·7	18·0
Enfield	25·5	24·6	15·4	26·8	24·4	16·3
Harrow	24·1	22·5	17·7	24·8	24·8	17·0

LEA	January 1985 Average Class Size Primary Schools	January 1985 Average Class Size for Pupils under 14 in Secondary Schools	January 1985 Average Class Size for Pupils 14 and over in Secondary Schools	January 1986 Average Class Size Primary Schools	January 1986 Average Class Size for Pupils under 14 in Secondary Schools	January 1986 Average Class Size for Pupils 14 and over in Secondary Schools
Havering	25·6	23·9	16·9	25·8	23·2	16·3
Hereford and Worcester	25·9	24·5	17·1	25·9	24·0	17·6
Hillingdon	25·5	23·2	16·7	25·7	24·1	17·7
Kent	27·0	24·6	17·8	27·1	24·1	18·0
Kingston Upon Thames	24·6	24·9	16·1	25·1	24·8	14·6
Lincolnshire	26·5	24·2	17·9	27·0	23·7	18·2
Merton	24·1	24·1	17·3	25·4	24·7	17·6
Norfolk	24·0	23·2	18·7	24·8	23·1	18·5
Northamptonshire	24·5	23·5	16·6	25·2	23·0	16·9
Redbridge	25·9	22·6	16·8	27·0	24·3	17·6
Sefton	25·9	24·3	17·8	26·5	24·6	18·0
Solihull	25·7	23·1	18·8	26·0	23·4	18·6
Suffolk	23·9	23·1	18·4	24·6	23·4	18·4
Surrey	25·0	24·8	17·7	25·2	24·2	17·7
Sutton	26·9	25·4	16·5	27·7	23·5	17·5
Trafford	25·6	23·1	18·7	26·3	23·1	18·7
West Sussex	26·1	25·0	17·9	26·2	24·0	17·8
Wirral	26·4	24·1	16·7	26·9	24·1	17·7
Overall Conservative	25·5	24·0	17·4	26·0	23·9	17·6
Labour						
Barking	23·7	22·2	16·8	23·9	23·0	16·9
Barnsley	23·8	23·1	17·5	24·5	22·8	17·3
Birmingham	23·9	24·4	18·7	26·6	24·7	18·8
Bolton	26·6	24·4	17·2	27·5	23·3	17·6
Cleveland	24·5	23·9	17·4	25·4	23·6	17·6
Coventry	25·6	24·6	17·8	25·6	23·4	18·6
Derbyshire	25·0	24·3	18·2	25·3	23·4	18·4
Doncaster	23·7	24·2	18·0	24·6	24·2	18·3
Durham	25·1	24·4	18·0	25·7	24·4	17·8
Gateshead	21·6	23·1	16·8	22·7	23·7	17·0
Haringey	22·0	21·5	15·7	22·0	20·4	15·7
Hounslow	22·7	22·7	16·9	24·3	22·4	17·4
Inner London	20·6	21·1	16·2	21·8	21·5	16·2
Kirklees	24·4	23·8	17·2	25·2	23·3	17·2
Knowsley	24·8	21·6	17·0	25·0	22·4	16·4
Leeds	25·2	23·9	16·6	25·5	23·4	17·0
Liverpool	23·7	24·0	17·4	23·8	22·8	17·9
Manchester	24·7	22·9	16·6	25·2	22·7	16·5
Newcastle Upon Tyne	22·5	21·6	16·3	23·9	21·9	15·9
Newham	23·5	22·5	16·8	24·0	21·6	16·8
North Tyneside	21·1	20·2	15·9	20·6	20·3	15·5
Nottinghamshire	23·7	23·1	17·2	24·6	22·7	16·9
Oldham	25·5	23·8	17·9	27·0	23·6	17·6
Rotherham	24·5	23·6	18·1	24·6	23·9	17·1
Salford	24·0	22·2	16·9	24·4	22·7	17·2
Sandwell	24·2	22·4	17·0	24·8	22·2	16·8
Sheffield	22·8	23·6	17·5	23·8	23·3	17·8
South Tyneside	23·4	22·7	15·0	23·4	22·7	16·0
St. Helens	24·7	23·7	16·7	25·8	22·9	16·6
Staffordshire	24·2	23·6	17·5	25·3	23·8	17·9
Sunderland	24·3	22·9	16·7	24·4	22·9	16·4
Tameside	25·6	23·7	16·8	26·6	23·0	16·9
Wakefield	24·4	23·2	18·3	25·2	22·5	18·0
Wigan	24·8	23·0	17·4	25·5	22·9	17·3
Wolverhampton	21·3	23·1	16·1	22·8	22·4	17·0
Overall Labour	23·8	23·2	17·2	24·5	23·0	17·3
Alliance						
Isle of Wight	26·3	24·1	17·3	27·2	24·7	17·7
Overall Alliance	26·3	24·1	17·3	27·2	24·7	17·7
Independent						
Isles of Scilly	12·3	17·0	10·4	12·3	14·8	11·2
Overall Independent	12·3	17·0	10·4	12·3	14·8	11·2

LEA	January 1985 Average Class Size Primary Schools	January 1985 Average Class Size for Pupils under 14 in Secondary Schools	January 1985 Average Class Size for Pupils 14 and over in Secondary Schools	January 1986 Average Class Size Primary Schools	January 1986 Average Class Size for Pupils under 14 in Secondary Schools	January 1986 Average Class Size for Pupils 14 and over in Secondary Schools
No overall control						
Avon	27·3	24·2	18·0	28·0	23·7	18·7
Bedfordshire	25·3	23·6	18·1	25·5	24·9	18·1
Bradford	24·6	22·6	18·3	25·4	22·8	18·0
Brent	21·9	20·6	15·1	22·8	19·6	14·8
Calderdale	24·8	24·1	16·6	25·0	24·0	17·5
Cambridgeshire	25·9	24·3	18·2	26·4	23·9	18·0
Cheshire	25·8	24·3	17·9	26·4	24·4	18·5
Cornwall	25·4	23·7	18·3	25·7	23·2	18·3
Cumbria	23·2	22·9	17·0	23·8	22·7	16·6
Devon	25·8	24·5	18·3	26·1	24·5	18·6
Dudley	24·8	22·5	17·5	25·4	22·4	17·4
Essex	26·6	24·6	18·2	27·1	24·6	18·1
Gloucestershire	25·7	24·1	17·4	26·1	24·1	17·8
Hampshire	27·1	24·3	18·9	26·9	23·7	19·0
Hertfordshire	24·9	23·5	16·3	25·6	23·8	16·2
Humberside	23·6	23·1	17·3	24·3	22·9	17·1
Lancashire	26·5	23·7	18·3	26·9	23·6	18·1
Leicestershire	24·7	23·8	18·0	25·4	22·9	18·3
North Yorkshire	24·2	23·9	18·1	24·6	23·8	18·3
Northumberland	25·4	23·4	17·6	25·1	23·2	17·5
Oxfordshire	26·5	24·4	17·4	26·2	24·2	18·1
Richmond upon Thames	24·7	23·5	18·9	24·6	22·5	18·7
Rochdale	25·3	22·6	16·6	26·6	22·4	17·0
Shropshire	23·7	23·0	17·1	24·3	22·9	17·6
Somerset	27·2	24·5	19·6	27·1	23·9	19·6
Stockport	26·2	24·2	17·0	26·4	24·0	17·5
Walsall	21·8	22·2	16·1	22·7	21·9	16·2
Waltham Forest	24·0	20·4	16·1	25·0	21·4	16·3
Warwickshire	25·3	24·3	18·9	26·2	24·5	18·6
Wiltshire	25·8	23·5	18·6	25·6	23·8	18·9
Overall no control	25·5	23·7	17·8	25·9	23·6	17·9

TRANSPORT

Roads

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the results of his review of the national trunk road construction programme.

Mr. Moore: On 28 April 1987.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

United States (Perfume Imports)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the current volume of imports of perfumes from the United States of America; and what are the customs duties imposed thereon.

Mr. Alan Clark: For the first two months of 1987, 3,055 litres of perfumes and scents were imported from the United States under United Kingdom tariff heading 3306-2100. The rate of common customs tariff duty chargeable on that heading is 6·6 per cent.

Airbus

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any recent representations from employees or management at British Aerospace in Hatfield relating to future development projects proposed by Airbus Industrie; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Government have received representations from British Aerospace senior management, and from British Aerospace employees and union representatives at a number of sites, including Hatfield, about the company's application for launch aid in respect of the Airbus A330 and A340 projects. Discussions with the company are continuing, and the Government aim to reach a decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those United Kingdom companies which have been awarded contracts as part of current airbus programmes; and if he will state in each case the value and general nature of the contract concerned.

Mr. Pattie: On the information currently available to the Department, 98 United Kingdom companies, in the following list, have been awarded contracts as part of current programmes. These contracts relate to the supply of materials, components and parts for airframes and aeroengines, avionics and equipment. In addition, United Kingdom companies are involved in the supply of furnishings and fittings to airlines purchasing Airbus aircraft. It is not possible to give the values of these contracts, as orders are placed in batches and the total values cannot be determined until the production programme, and in some cases, spares demand, has ended.

Airbus—United Kingdom suppliers

British Aerospace
Dowty Rotol

contracts, as orders are placed in batches and the total values cannot be determined until the production programme, and in some cases, spares demand, has ended.

Airbus—United Kingdom suppliers

British Aerospace
Dowty Rotol
Dowty Electrics
Flight Refuelling
Fliteline
HTE
ICORE
Intertechnique
Lucas
Rolls-Royce
Aircraft Porous Media
Marconi
Marston Palmer
Plessey
Singer Link Miles
Redifusion Simulation
Smiths
Bridport Aviation
Fireproof Tanks UK
Pall
Avimo
Thermal Control
Rosemount
Vickers Systems
Triplex
Short Bros
A. & E. Engineering Ltd.
Ampep
Aviation Tool Corporation
Cleveland Guest Engineering
Gretone Ltd.
Hychrome
Hyde Components
Kilgour Engineering Ltd.
Luneside Engineering Ltd.
Manx Engineering
MIC
Middleton Sheet Metal
Moores (Wallisdown) Ltd.
Robert Stuarts
Sculpture Machining Ltd.
Stopchoc
Sycamore Developments
Trefyn Engineering Co.
Weston Electronic Units Ltd.
Abbey Panel Ltd.
AEM
AIM
Aircraft Engineering Components Ltd.
Algram Engineering Co. Ltd.
Blenkins Precision Engineering
Cleveland Guest
Dunlop
GEC/Osram
H. & E. Ltd.
Holland Granfield Ltd.
Hugates
Impact Finishers
Laser Profiles Ltd.
NEMO Heat Treatments
Peate Grange
Plastic Coating
R. B. Precision Engineering Co.
Southborne Sheet Metal Co. Ltd.
C. F. Taylor (Metal Workers) Ltd.
Thorn EMI
Union Carbide (Swindon)
United Moulders
W. E. S. Ltd.
Wessex Metal Spinning Co.
British Alcan
IMI
HDA
LMF
Cameron Iron Works
IPC
Stone Founderies
P. I. Castings
Kent Aerospace
British Composite Materials
CIBA/CEIGY
MMM
BICC
Berger
Hi Shear Europe
Lunead
T. J. Brooks
Kaynam
RHP
Rose Bearings
Soumian
Hellermann Deutach
ICI
Bestobell
Androx
Fine Tubes
Fothergill & Harvey
Maycast-Precision
Metal Improvement Co.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department has considered any estimate for the number of jobs which will be created by the airbus project in each of the next 10 years and; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Estimates currently available to the Department indicate that the numbers of jobs which could be directly generated in the United Kingdom by the Airbus A330/A340 programme in each of the next ten years are as follows:

	Number
1987	750
1988	1,350
1989	2,600
1990	1,550
1991	550
1992	1,200
1993	1,000
1994	1,000
1995	—
1996	—
	10,000

These estimates relate to jobs which would be either maintained or created within British Aerospace and companies supplying equipment and materials to the Airbus A330/A340 programme. British Aerospace have further estimated that, taking account of jobs which would be maintained or created within the wider community, the total number of A330/A340 related jobs could amount to 20,000.

The significance of the potential employment benefits to the United Kingdom of participation in the Airbus A330/A340 programme is fully recognised by the Government.

British Aerospace

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the value and percentage of product cost which was represented by Government funding for British Aerospace's *(a)* design and development costs and *(b)* production costs for each of the following projects *(a)* 125-800, *(b)* Jetstream 31,

(c) ATP, *(d)* 146-100, *(e)* 146-200, *(f)* 146-300, *(g)* A300 B2/B4, *(h)* A300-600, *(i)* A310-200, *(j)* A310-300 and *(k)* A320-200.

Mr. Pattie: The Government are not funding British Aerospace's production costs on any current civil aircraft programme. The Government have agreed to provide launch aid of up to £250 million, representing 54 per cent. of British Aerospace's estimated development costs on the A320. The Government also provided financial assistance of £7·8 million to Hawker Siddeley Aviation for development work on the 146 project, before that company was incorporated into British Aerospace.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning total British Aerospace investment in current civil aircraft programmes; and how much this works out at *(a)* per British Aerospace employee and *(b)* per employee in the United Kingdom aerospace industry.

Mr. Pattie: On the information currently available to the Department, the cumulative investment in civil aircraft programmes, comprising launch costs and production work in progress, by British Aerospace out of its own funds since 1979 is of the order of £1,300 million. This represents some £17,300 per British Aerospace employee and some £6,500 per employee in the United Kingdom aerospace industry. In addition, £196 million has been spent on launch costs, which was financed by Government launch aid.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total amount of funds made available by the Government to British Aerospace for current civil aircraft programmes in the form of *(a)* interest-free loan, *(b)* grant and *(c)* interest-bearing loan.

Mr. Pattie: The Government have agreed to provide British Aerospace with repayable launch aid of up to £250 million in respect of one civil aircraft programme. Since January 1981, the Government have offered British Aerospace regional development grants and regional selective assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act amounting to approximately £18 million, from which current civil aircraft programmes have derived benefit. In addition, the Government's investments in British Aerospace between 1977 and 1985 included public dividend capital from 1977 to 1980, a holding of ordinary shares from 1981 to 1985, and interest-bearing, repayable National Loans Fund advances. These investments were not directly related to individual civil aircraft programmes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate his Department has made of the revenue to be generated to the United Kingdom by *(a)* Airbus Industrie's forecast sales of 1,000 aircraft and *(b)* only 60 per cent. of their projected sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: On Airbus Industrie's current forecast of 1,000 sales of A330 and A340 aircraft to the year 2005, it is estimated that the revenues, expressed in outturn values, generated to the United Kingdom in respect of airframes would be in order of £16·5 billion. The corresponding figure for 600 aircraft sales would be in the order of £10 billion. In addition, it is expected that further substantial revenues would accrue from the supply of equipment and aero-engine components, but no estimate of the value can be given until the supplier selection procedures by Airbus Industrie and the engine manufacturers have been completed.

The Airbus A330/A340 programme would, in common with other civil aerospace programmes, contribute substantially to the United Kingdom's export earnings.

Japan

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about trade relations with Japan.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 April 1987, c. *552*]: During his recent visit to Japan, my hon. and learned Friend, the Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), underlined the importance that this Government attach to the introduction of real and effective market opening measures by the Japanese authorities.

At present, we are specifically concerned with two important objectives. First, in the financial services sector, we have laid down a timetable to secure access for British firms to the Tokyo stock exchange; second, in telecommunications, we have made it clear that we attach the highest importance to the equitable treatment of Cable and Wireless and the IDC consortium bidding to supply alternative international telecommunications services in Japan.

We are also looking at Community safeguard measures which may prove necessary in the event of substantial diversion of Japanese exports following the implementation of recent United States protectionist measures.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 114**

SESSION 1986–87

6th April–24th April 1987

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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